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Witch Hat Atelier

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WITCH HAT ATELIER

♦

KAMOME
SHIRAHAMA

Chapter 36

WATER IS THE WORST.

IT'S SCARY, IT'S SINISTER...

...SO COLD AND SO HEAVY.

TOO MUCH CAN KILL YOU. TOO LITTLE CAN KILL YOU.

IT COULD BURN US TO A CRISP... SEE?

JUST AS EASILY AS IT KEEPS US WARM AND ALIVE.

ISN'T THIS CAMP-FIRE THE SAME?

IF SOMETHING IS SCARY, I SAY, EMBRACE IT!

GET TO KNOW IT, AND YOU'LL FEEL SAFE, COMFORTED.

WHY, YOU CAN EVEN SLEEP SOUNDLY WHEN IT'S AT YOUR SIDE!

WILL THERE EVER COME A DAY WHEN I CAN SLEEP SOUNDLY...?

MAS-TER!

MOST LIKELY NOT.

BECAUSE I...

MASTER, CAN YOU HEAR ME...?!

HWUP

COCO...?

GASP

...

...MUST'VE BEEN A TRICK OF THE MIND.

JUST NOW, I WAS CERTAIN I HEARD HER CALLING OUT TO ME...

BLUE-TINGED LIGHT... THE SCENT OF SALT...

SEEMS I'M AT THE GREAT HALL. AND IN THE HEALING SPIRE, NO DOUBT.

FITTING SUCH DREAMS WOULD PLAGUE ME IF I'VE BEEN BROUGHT BACK TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA.

GOODNESS. I CAN EVEN HEAR THE RAGING TIDES—

KPLOO

...

AH. YEAH, ABOUT THAT.

...SOME MANNER OF FIDGETING ICEPACK, I SUPPOSE...?

WHAT... IN THE NAME OF...

SHE SAYS IT'S A WORK IN PROGRESS.

EVERY TIME SHE PUT IT ON YOUR FOREHEAD, YOU TOSSED AND TURNED.

BUT THAT JUST MADE HER ALL THE MORE DETERMINED TO POLISH UP THE SPELL.

THAT'S COCO'S INVENTION. THE EVER-FLOWING ICEPACK.

I SUPPOSE THAT'S WHY I FELT HER PRESENCE SO STRONGLY.

I SEE... A CREATION OF COCO'S...

AND... THE OTHERS, TOO! WHERE ARE THEY?!

!!

OF COURSE! COCO!

THEY'RE ASLEEP IN THE NEXT ROOM OVER.

CALM DOWN. IT'S NIGHT.

...

DON'T TELL ME THEY WERE APPREHENDED BY THE ORDER BACK AT THE CAVE!

I THOUGHT PERHAPS SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED TO THEM.

FROM THE SOMBER LOOK YOU'RE WEARING, I WAS AFRAID...

OH... OH, THANK GOODNESS. THEY'RE SAFE.

HEY, QIFREY... TELL ME SOMETHING, WOULD YOU?

GWIP

OLLY?

WHEN YOU SAY YOU'RE AFRAID...

...YOU DO MEAN YOU'RE AFRAID FOR *THEIR* SAKES, RIGHT?

BE STRAIGHT WITH ME.

WHAT *IS* COCO TO YOU? AN APPRENTICE YOU'VE SWORN TO PROTECT?

OR IS SHE A MEANS TO AN END—

A *CLUE* TO HELP YOU CHASE DOWN THE BRIMMED CAPS?

HOW COULD YOU SAY THAT?

WHY WOULD YOU WANT...

...TO KEEP ME AWAY FROM MASTER QIFREY?!

QIFREY IS ENTANGLED WITH THE BRIMMED CAPS IN SUCH A WAY...

!

...RATHER THAN ENSURE YOU REMAIN FAR AWAY.

...THAT I FEAR HE MAY BRING YOU CLOSER TO THEM...

ZWRSH

NO! I SAW HOW BADLY MASTER QIFREY GOT HURT!

HE RISKED *EVERYTHING* TO KEEP US SAFE!

IT ISN'T *HIS* FAULT THE BRIMMED CAPS KEEP ATTACKING US.

THEY'RE ONLY...

...AFTER US BECAUSE I...

IT PAINS ME TO SAY THIS, BUT I MUST WONDER IF QIFREY'S SHOW OF PROTECTION...

IF IT IS INDEED *YOU* THEY ARE AFTER...

...IS THAT NOT ALL THE MORE REASON TO REMAIN IN THE SAFETY OF THESE WALLS?

...IS BUT PRETENSE TO UNLEASH HIS OWN DEEP-SEATED GRUDGE.

HIS... PAST...?

NO CIRCUMSTANCE CAN JUSTIFY USE OF AN APPRENTICE TO HER MASTER'S OWN ENDS.

NO MATTER THE SLINGS AND ARROWS HE SUFFERED IN DAYS PAST, HE HAS LONG SINCE COME OF AGE.

...DID SOMETHING *HAPPEN*...

...BETWEEN MASTER QIFREY AND THE BRIMMED CAPS?

I'M SORRY... MAYBE I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO ASK THIS...

...BUT...

...IT WOULD BEHOOVE YOU TO HEAR WHAT THERE IS TO KNOW.

BUT PERHAPS ...

I SEE THE MAN SPEAKS LITTLE OF HIMSELF.

ANY-THING OVER THERE?!

'TWAS IN THE FOREST OF NIGHT,

THE FOREST OF DARK, THE SCELET FOREST OF THRISTAS...

SEARCH FOR ANY USABLE TRACES!

WE WILL HUNT THEM TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD, IF NEED BE!

BLAST IT ALL! THEY WERE RIGHT IN OUR GRASP!

NOTHING! VANISHED INTO DARK-NESS!

!

ZSH!!

THIS IS THE FOREST OF SHADOW– OF *DEATH.*

THEY WERE *HERE.* THAT MUCH IS PLAIN.

BUT WHAT BUSINESS DO THE BRIMMED CAPS HAVE AMONG THE BOUGHS OF BLACK?

A TRIFLE. I ONLY WISH I COULD DO MORE.

BELDARUIT, YOUR ASSISTANCE IS MOST APPRECI-ATED.

ANY TIME THE ORDER CALLS, I AM MOST HAPPY TO ASSIST.

IS THERE ANY PLACE MORE FIT TO CONCEAL DARK ARTS?

HE CALLS *THIS* A TRIFLE?

2SSS

SHHH

AS HE CLEARS AWAY THE RAIN ACROSS *THIS* WIDE A SPACE?

BLOOD.

AND FRESH, AT THAT.

YES. LOOK.

HAVE YOU FOUND SOME-THING?

INDEED. AND THERE'S MORE JUST AHEAD.

IT'S HARD TO MAKE OUT AGAINST THIS INFERNAL BLACKNESS, BUT I AM SURE OF IT.

BLOOD, YOU SAY?!

QUICKLY!

BRING THE GUIDANCE ORB! GET SOME INSIDE BEFORE IT'S LOST TO THE RAIN!

NO LINK IS STRONGER THAN BLOOD ITSELF!

GO! TO WHEREVER IT LEADS US!

WE MAY CATCH THEM YET!

IT'S POINTING... TO THE ROOTS OF THIS TREE...

TINK

TINK

ARE WE TO FIND CORPSE OR HIDEAWAY?

STAND CLEAR. I SHALL LIFT THE EARTH.

SHF

MERCY ON US ALL...

RSH

IT LOOKS BRAND NEW.

BLAST. NOTHING BUT A CASKET.

I SMELL NO STENCH OF A ROTTING CORPSE...

...THOUGH THE RAIN IS FALLING HEAVILY ENOUGH TO POOL ON THE CASKET'S SURFACE.

IS IT EMPTY? A TRAP?

WHAT LIES IN WAIT?

!!!

A CHILD!

QUICKLY! IS HE ALIVE?!

CAN YOU SPEAK? WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

GIVE HIM HERE!

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, BOY? CAN YOU HEAR ME?

...TOOK IT.

THE WITCH...

HE TOOK IT FROM ME...

...THE BOY HAD BEEN INTERRED ALIVE, LEFT TO PERISH IN DARKNESS.

...WITH RIGHT EYE PLUCKED AND SECRETED AWAY...

WITH MIND WIPED, SO THAT HE PROVIDE NO CLUE TO GIVE CHASE...

...

THAT...

...WAS QIFREY'S STATE WHEN HE CAME INTO OUR CARE.

BUT PITIFUL WAS THE SIGHT OF A CHILD BEREFT OF EVERY GIFT BUT LIFE ITSELF.

FORTUNE SMILED ON HIM, THAT HE WAS FOUND ALIVE...

...AND WITHOUT ANY TRACE OF INK SCRAWLED UPON SKIN.

I BATTED AWAY ALL OPPOSI-TION...

COME, BOY.

TAKE MY HAND.

I ASSURE YOU, I AM MOST EARNEST.

ARE YOU MAD, BELDARUIT?!

THE ORDER SOUGHT TO SCRUB HIS MIND AGAIN, TO HAVE HIM LIVE IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

YOU SHALL STUDY THE WAYS OF THE WITCH WITH ME.

...AND RECEIVED HIM AS MY APPREN-TICE.

I CAN'T BELIEVE MASTER QIFREY WENT THROUGH ALL THAT...

...AND THE FATE OF HIS RIGHT EYE.

...NO ONE CAN SAY. BUT IT DID NOT STOP HIM FROM ATTEMPTING TO UNCOVER THE EVENTS OF HIS PAST...

WHAT TRANS-PIRED BEFORE THAT...

WHILE HE DEVELOPED ONE DEAR FRIENDSHIP, IT DID NOT ALLEVIATE THAT... *DESPERATION* IN HIM.

HIS HATRED RAN DARK, AND HIS FIXATION, DEEP.

IT PAINED ME, WATCHING HIM SNEAK AWAY, NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, TO SCOUR THE WORLD ABOVE FOR ANY CLUE OF THE BRIMMED CAPS.

はっ！ GASP!

DID YOU SAY *THE TOWER OF TOMES...?!*

I DARED HOPE HE HAD AT LAST FORESWORN HIS AWFUL PAST.

ULTIMATELY, HE CAME TO THE TOWER OF TOMES, WHERE HIS SEARCH ABRUPTLY ENDED.

THEN THAT MEANS HE'S BEEN INSIDE!

DID HE FIND SOME KIND OF ANSWER IN THE TOWER?

BUT WHY DID HE STOP SEARCHING?

QUITE THE CONTRARY.

IT IS MY BELIEF THAT GOING THERE MADE HIM REALIZE...

...EVEN IF HE WERE TO LOCATE HIS LOST MEMORIES AND EYE...

...HE COULD NEVER HOPE TO RECLAIM THEM INTO HIS BEING...

...WITHOUT TURNING TO THE DARK ARTS.

IT WOULD COST HIM HIS KNOWLEDGE OF MAGIC, THE FRIENDSHIP HE'D NURTURED— ALL THAT HIS NEW LIFE HAD BESTOWED.

QIFREY KNEW IN WALKING SUCH A PATH...

...HE STOOD TO LOSE *EVERYTHING* ONCE MORE.

I HOPE YOU NOW SEE...

...WHAT DANGER IS TO BE HAD IN BLITHELY APPROACHING THE BRIMMED CAPS.

HE STOOD AT THE SAME IMPASSE THAT YOU DO NOW.

WIELDING THE PEN TO DRAW FORBIDDEN SEALS...

...IS AN ACT THAT CONDEMNS ONE TO—

BUT...

BUT WHAT IF...

WHAT IF THERE'S SOMEONE YOU WANT TO HELP, MORE THAN *ANYTHING*...

...BUT *NONE* OF THE SPELLS YOU TRY ARE ABLE TO SAVE THEM?!

WHAT IF YOU GET TO THE TOWER, AND YOU FIND THAT THERE *ISN'T* AN ANSWER INSIDE?

WHAT IF FORBIDDEN MAGIC IS THE *ONLY* CHOICE YOU HAVE?

WHEN THAT HAPPENS...

DO I... DOES EVERY WITCH...

...HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO *GIVE UP?*

...

...THAT MAGIC IS NO MIRACLE? THAT IT IS NOT A POWER MEANT TO GRANT ANY WISH YOUR HEART DESIRES?

UPON FIRST PICKING UP THE PEN, DID YOU NOT LEARN...

THAT WHICH CURES ANY AFFLICTION ...

...MAY AS EASILY BESTOW IT.

IT IS MY BELIEF, COCO, THAT THERE SHOULD BE A LIMIT TO WHAT MORTAL HANDS CAN GRASP. IT IS BETTER FOR US THAT WAY.

...BACK AT THE ATELIER...

...WHEN I LEARNED YOU'D TAKEN HER ON, YOU SAID THAT LOSING COCO WOULD MEAN LOSING YOUR ONLY CLUE.

SST!!

THIS NEVER WAS ABOUT HELPING COCO'S MOTHER, WAS IT?

IT'S ABOUT WHAT SHE CAN DO FOR *YOU* AND THE THINGS YOU'RE AFTER.

...WHERE IS THIS COMING FROM?

I WAS THINKIN' I'D DO YOU A FAVOR.

FIX UP YOUR SPECTACLES, YOU KNOW? THEY GOT SMASHED UP PRETTY GOOD IN ROMONON.

...

...I DON'T REMEMBER HEARING ABOUT A SEAL ETCHED INTO THE *LEFT*.

I'D KNOWN ABOUT THE BLACK LENS.

THE OPACATING SPELL YOU USE TO HIDE YOUR MISSING EYE.

BUT...

PRETTY SURE THIS DIDN'T USED TO BE HERE.

IT'S WHAT YOU'D USE TO PROTECT THE EYES IF THEIR SIGHT IS GOING.

キラン GLIMMER

A SEAL THAT'S DESIGNED TO BLOCK OUT HARSH LIGHT.

SCALES FROM THE BLUSHING BRIDE, FOR TRANSPARENT INK.

...YOU TOOK HER ON WITHOUT TELLING ME SINGLE A THING?

IS *THIS* THE REASON...

IS *THIS* THE REASON YOU WERE SO EAGER TO GIVE CHASE TO THOSE GUYS...

...EVEN WILLING TO *ABANDON* YOUR APPRENTICES IN ROMONON?

IS *THIS* WHY?

PLEASE! OLRUGGIO, I—

...TO PICK UP THE SEARCH THAT YOU RENOUNCED ALL THOSE YEARS AGO—

DON'T LIE TO ME, QIFREY.

STANDING TO LOSE THE ONLY SIGHT YOU'VE GOT LEFT SEEMS LIKE A REAL FINE REASON...

BELDARUIT?!

PWUFF

OLRUGGIO! QIFREY! YOU MUST COME AT ONCE!

?

I'M FULLY TO BLAME FOR THIS.

FORGIVE ME.

WHAT'S... WHAT'S ALL THE COMMOTION?

SO CLEVER! SO QUICK TO REMEMBER!

THAT, AND... SHE'S TRULY QUITE TALENTED, YOU SEE?

I'M AFRAID SHE'S VENTURED OUT ON HER OWN.

IT'S COCO! I, ERM... SEEM TO HAVE LOST HER.

I TRIED TO HURRY AFTER HER, BUT I WAS TOO LATE!

YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN HOW EASILY SHE LOCATED THE DOOR-KNOB TO THE WINDOWWAY PARLOR!

WHAT ARE YOU GETTING AT?

?

HOW COULD YOU LET THIS HAPPEN?!

SHE'S *SUPPOSED* TO BE IN THE NEXT ROOM OVER!

FAST ASLEEP! NO, FORGET THAT.

WH...?!

WHAT DID YOU SAY?!

WHAT IDEAS DID YOU PUT IN HER HEAD?!

—!!!

I SIMPLY ANSWERED HER QUESTIONS.

I EXPLAINED HOW TO RESCUE SOMEONE WHO CAN ONLY BE RESTORED BY FORBIDDEN MAGIC.

WELL IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH...

...TO GUESS ALL THAT YOU TOLD HER!

FWSH

ththth

I HAVE TO BRING HER BACK...

I HAVE TO GO AFTER HER.

EASY THERE!

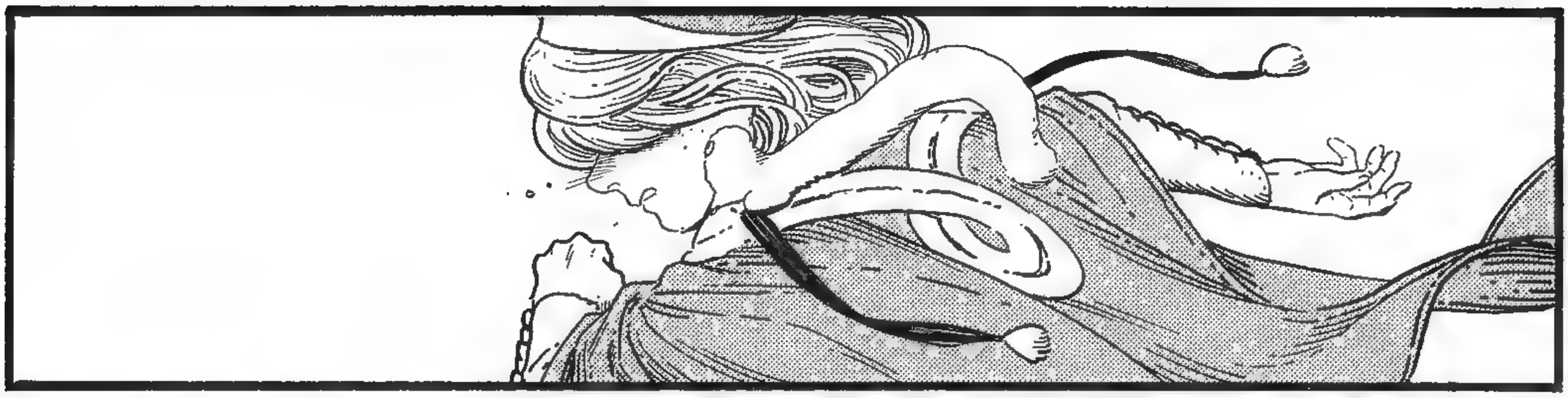
WE DON'T HAVE THE FIRST IDEA WHERE TO START LOOKING.

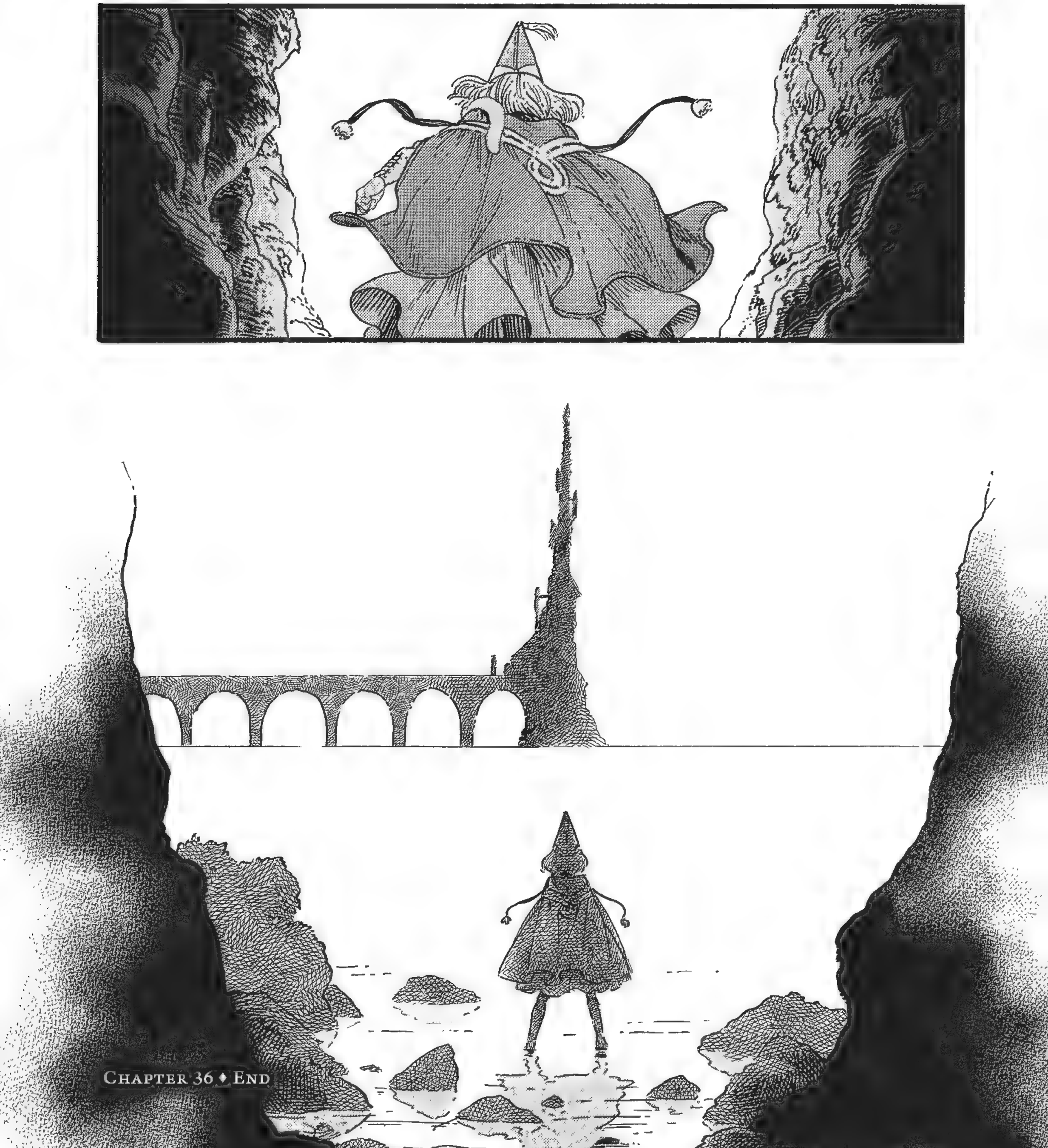
SHE TOOK THE WINDOWWAY. SHE COULD BE ANYWHERE.

YES, WE DO.

I BELIEVE...

...THERE'S ONLY ONE PLACE SHE'D TRY TO GO.





Chapter 36 ♦ End

Witch Hat Atelier

Chapter 37

HUFF

HUFF

THE BRIDGE...

IT'S STILL SO FAR AWAY...

...

...WOULD BE ANY-THING BUT SAFE.

...BUT SOME-THING TELLS ME FLYING OVER THE WATER...

IT'D BE A LOT FASTER JUST TO CROSS THE LAKE...

IF ONLY I COULD MAKE **ALL** THE WATER VANISH.

LIKE WHAT HAPPENED AT THE STAIRCASE RIVER—TURN **EVERYTHING** TO SAND...

GASP

HOW...

HOW COULD I LET MYSELF **THINK** SUCH A THING?

IMAGINE WHAT A SPELL LIKE THAT WOULD DO...

...TO ALL THE FISH AND LITTLE CREATURES WHO CALL THE LAKE HOME.

HOW DID THINGS AT THE RIVER TURN OUT LIKE THAT, ANYWAY?

RUMMAGE

AND BESIDES, A SPELL LIKE THAT WOULD BE ENORMOUS. I DON'T HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO...

...

I'M NERVOUS AND SCARED, AND IT'S EATING ME UP FROM INSIDE.

I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND **ANYTHING.**

IF I CAN JUST MAKE IT THERE, MY ANSWER'S SURE TO BE INSIDE.

THE TOWER OF TOMES...

ISN'T IT?

VSSHH

IT HAS TO BE IN THERE.

MASTER QIFREY WOULDN'T LIE, WOULD HE?

TMP
TMP
TMP
TMP

THE WINDOW-WAY PARLOR

CREEEAK

SHE'S GOT QUITE THE MEMORY.

IT'S ASTOUNDING. SHE ONLY SAW ME OPEN THE WAY TO THE TOWER ONE TIME.

AND YET SHE SOMEHOW MEMORIZED THE CORRECT COMBINATION.

BUT ARE WE *CERTAIN* THE TOWER IS THE OBJECT OF HER FLIGHT?

DO NOT TAKE LIGHTLY THE LENGTHS A CHILD WILL GO FOR THE THINGS SHE LOVES!

IF I WERE IN COCO'S SHOES, THIS IS PRECISELY WHERE I WOULD GO.

GHRK

!

SWSH

VSSSHHH-

ZRSH

ZRSH

Z-ZSH

THE MONSTERS OF THE LAKE HAVE CAUGHT SCENT OF INTRUDERS...

SHF

AND THEY SEEM TO BE CONCENTRATING THEIR ASSAULT ON THE FAR CLIFF.

THAT'S MOST LIKELY WHERE SHE IS!

VSSSHHH

VSS

SHHH

SLR

CH

FRSPLRRRRSH

HE'S OUT OF HIS MIND, TRYIN' TO FLY OVER THE LAKE.

A GIANT WATER PUPPET OF DIVERSION, HM?

HUH? WHAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT?

IT SEEMS... I MAY HAVE MISJUDGED HIM.

I'VE HAD MY CONCERNS...

...THAT QIFREY WOULD GO TO ANY LENGTHS TO TAKE BACK THE THINGS WHICH HE LOST.

BUT THE WAY HE SOARED OFF NOW... IT'S AS THOUGH HE'S WILLING TO RISK HIS DRAWING HAND TO ENSURE THE CHILD'S SAFETY.

...!

HMPH!

IT IS NOT HIS DEDICATION TO HER I SHOULD BE CONCERNED ABOUT...

...BUT HIS DISREGARD FOR HIS OWN SAFETY.

IF HE'S PUSHING HIS OWN INJURIES FROM MIND, I'VE BEEN GRAPPLING WITH THE WRONG FEAR.

SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY, HE'S FINALLY DONNED A TEACHER'S VISAGE.

...HOW DID I MISS IT?

...

IS THAT TRUE, QIFREY...?

IS THAT WHY...?

!

IF YOU CAN, GIVE ME A SIGN THAT YOU'RE SAFE!

COCO, CAN YOU HEAR ME?!

COCO!

THIS *HAS* TO BE THE SPOT.

COCO!

MASTER...?

EVERY-
THING'S...
ALL
RIGHT...?

YOU
MUST HAVE
BEEN SO
FRIGHT-
ENED.

COCO!

OH, THANK
GOODNESS.

EVERY-
THING
IS ALL
RIGHT
NOW.

GIVE ME
YOUR HAND.

COCO?

ARE YOU *SURE*
EVERYTHING IS
ALL RIGHT...?

IS IT
REALLY,
THOUGH?

THE MORE I LEARN ABOUT MAGIC, THE MORE UNEASY IT MAKES ME!

I'VE BEEN SCARED THIS WHOLE TIME!

I'M SCARED, MASTER!

DO YOU *REALLY* BELIEVE WE'LL FIND A WAY TO SAVE MY MOM?

THE MORE I STUDY, THE MORE THINGS I'M TOLD I MUSTN'T DO!

I WASN'T ABLE TO BREAK THE SPELL ON EUINI.

*AND LORD BELDARUIT SAYS THERE ARE SOME THINGS MAGIC **CAN'T** FIX.*

...THAT I JUST MIGHT BEGIN REACHING FOR THINGS I SHOULDN'T.

I WORRY THAT WHEN MY HANDS FAIL TO FIND HOPE—WHEN THEY END UP GRASPING AT THIN AIR...

WHAT IF I'M NEVER ABLE TO SAVE ANYONE?

...MY WORK NEVER PAYS OFF?

...AND TRY AND TRY...

...NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRY...

WHAT IF...

BUT NOW I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN EVEN BELIEVE THAT/

I THOUGHT IF WE GOT TO THE TOWER, THE ANSWER WOULD BE WAITING.

IF THAT HAPPENS, THEN MAYBE...

I SHOULD'VE NEVER BEEN A WITCH AT AL—

COCO.

COCO, LISTEN.

...!

BUT THERE *IS* HOPE.

IT IS TRUE THAT THE TOWER...

...DOES NOT CONTAIN AN ANSWER FOR EVERYONE.

AFTER ALL, IT'S NOT AN *ANSWER* YOU'RE HOPING TO FIND IN THERE.

HUH?

THE THING YOU'RE AFTER...

...IS THE PICTURE BOOK YOU DREW FROM THAT NIGHT.

IT IS NOT AN ANSWER MEANT TO UNDO A TERRIBLE SPELL...

...BUT RATHER A *PROBLEM* FOR YOU TO SOLVE.

A...

...PROB-LEM?

PONDERING...

THINK BACK...

...ON WHAT YOU'VE ACCOM-PLISHED.

JUST SO.

INQUIRING...

PRACTICING...

...AND SOLVING THE PROBLEMS BEFORE YOU, ONE STEP AT A TIME.

INNOVATING...

DISCUSSING...

RIGHT...!

BUT LOOK AT ALL THE TRIALS YOU'VE OVER-COME TOGETHER WITH YOUR FRIENDS.

IT WASN'T SO LONG AGO THAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW THE FIRST THING ABOUT MAGIC.

TMP

...WE CAN RELY ON THE WISDOM CONTAINED *HERE*, TO FIND A DIFFERENT WAY.

WHEN AN ANSWER IS NOT FORTH-COMING...

...YOU'LL BE ABLE TO PRODUCE ANY NUMBER OF NEW ANSWERS.

SO LONG AS YOU DON'T STOP IMAGINING...

THAT IS THE ESSENCE OF MAGIC.

DON'T YOU SEE?

IT'S WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED, COCO.

IT'S HOW FAR YOU'VE COME.

THE NEW ANSWERS WE DEVISED TO SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS...

THE SPELLS WE MADE...

OUR MAGIC...

PRODUCING ...

CREATING ...

DRAWING.

THAT IS WHY...

...YOU MUSTN'T SAY THAT HOPE IS LOST.

...THE KIND OF WITCHES WE ARE.

THAT'S JUST...

THERE IS *ALWAYS* HOPE.

MASTER! LOOK OUT!

ZR

CH

GASP

MASTER QIFREY ...

KAKRSH

KRKRRRM

トオオオン

KA

KRSH

THAT FOOL!

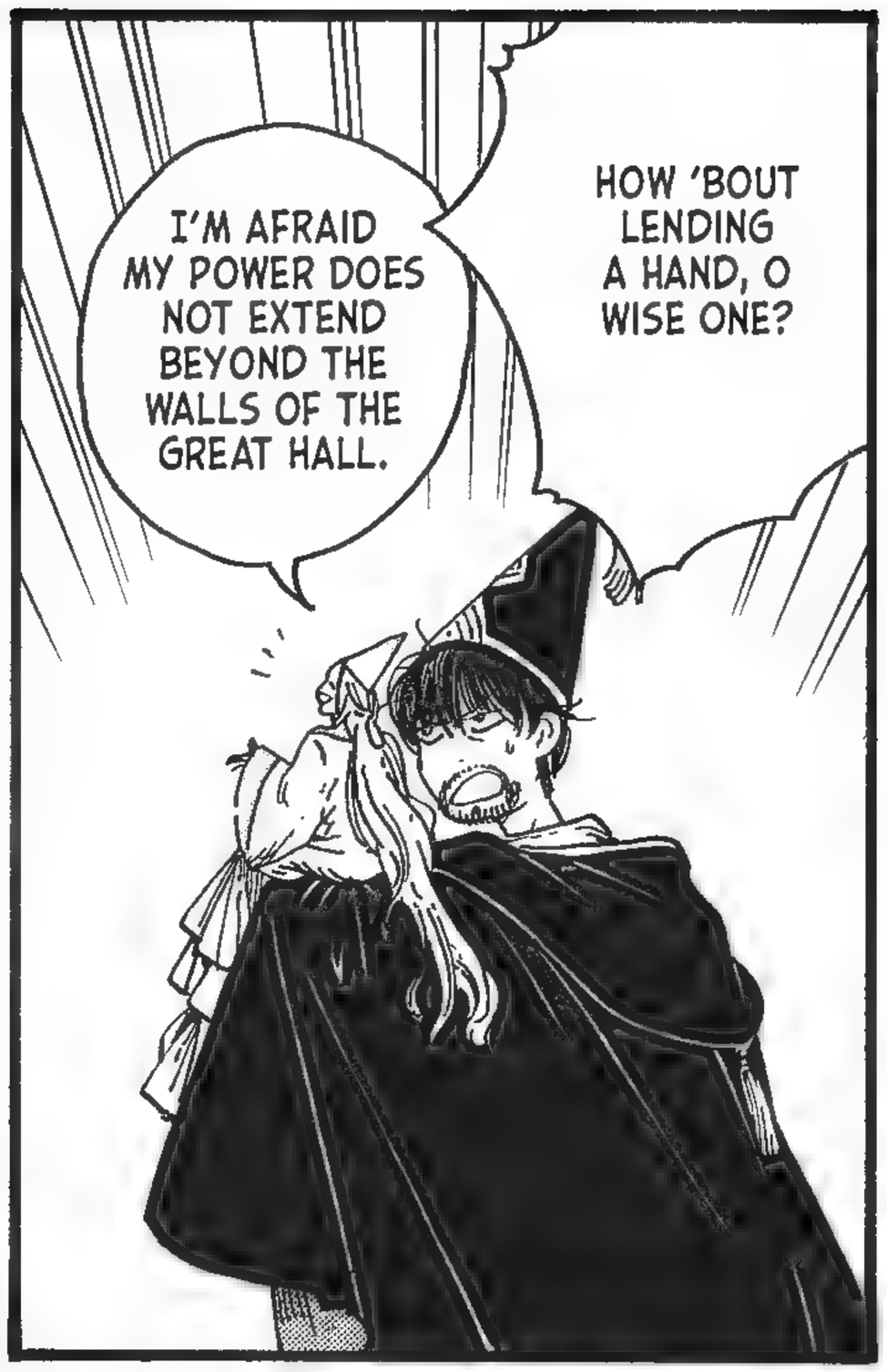
HE'S GONNA GET THEM *BOTH* KILLED!

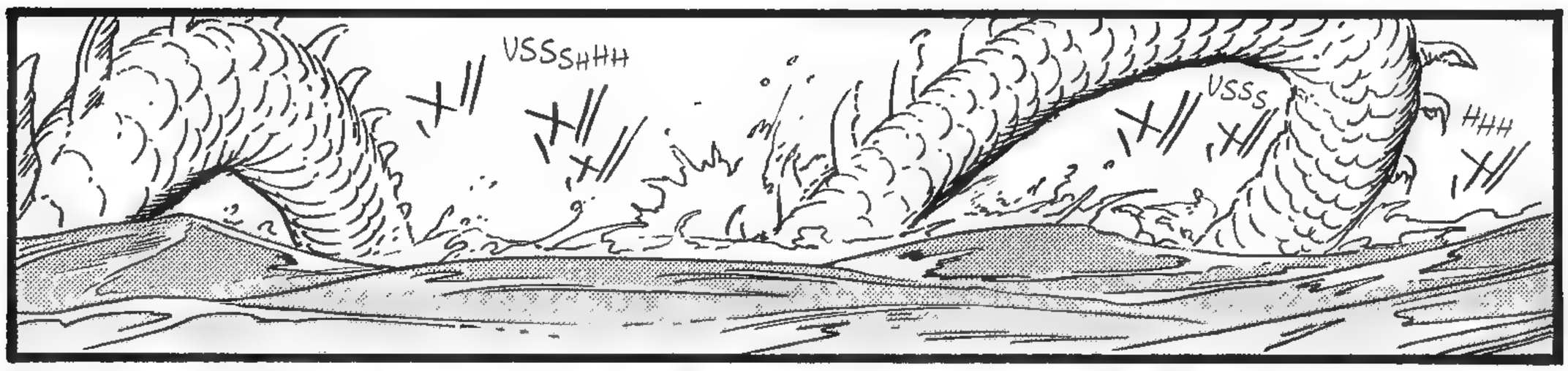
BUT I CAN'T MOVE AWAY. WE'LL BE IN A ROUGH SPOT...

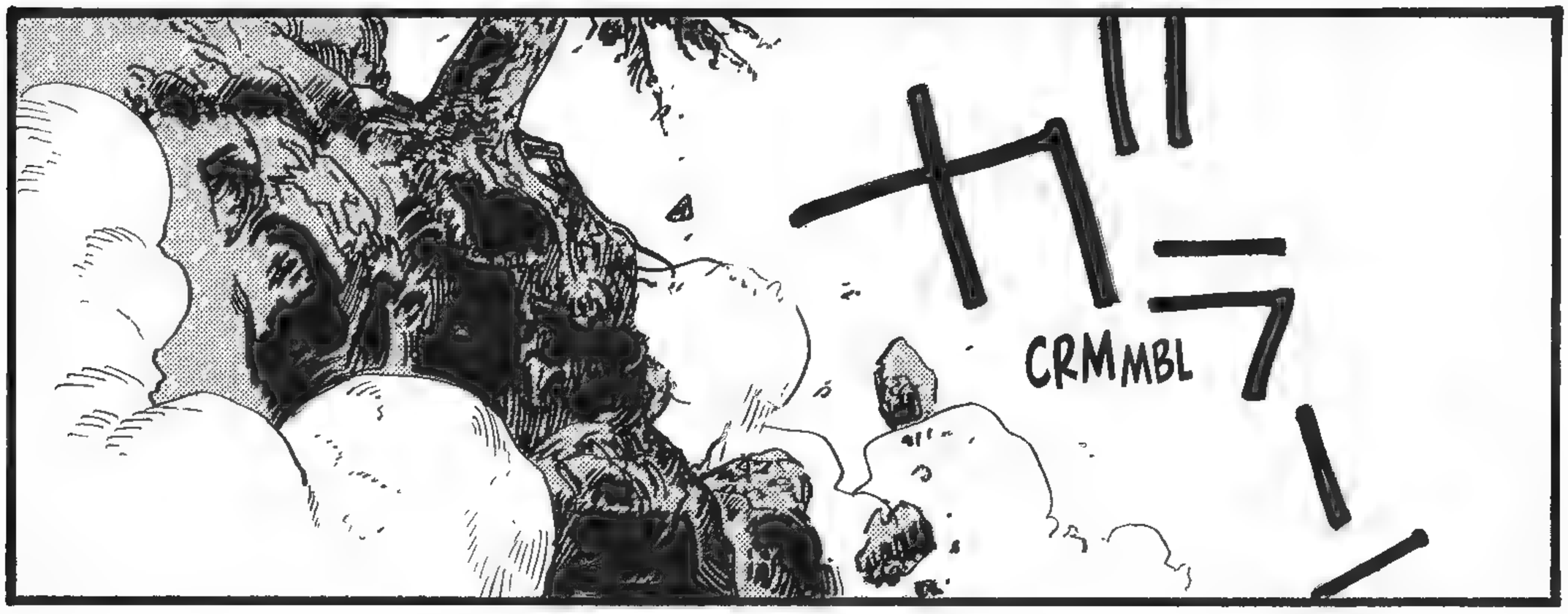
...IF THESE CREATURES DAMAGE THE WINDOWWAY.

BELDA
GRK
CUTE
AND BESIDES, RIGHT NOW I'M JUST A LIL BELDY-BEL!

EEP!
FWOO


I'M AFRAID MY POWER DOES NOT EXTEND BEYOND THE WALLS OF THE GREAT HALL.
HOW 'BOUT LENDING A HAND, O WISE ONE?


VSSSHHH
VSSS
HHH


CRMMBL

I'LL BE FINE.

YOU'RE NOT HURT, I HOPE?

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, MASTER?

HAH! I APPRECIATE THE CONCERN.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME! *YOU'RE* THE ONE WHO'S INJURED!

IF I WERE IN PROPER CONDITION, I'D PERHAPS MANAGE ANOTHER FLIGHT ACROSS WITH YOU IN TOW.

SST

COCO, WOULD YOU BE SO KIND AS TO TAKE THE TINY NOTEBOOK FROM MY BAG?

?

INSIDE, YOU'LL FIRST FIND A SEAL OF EXPANSION AND LEVITATION. CLOSE THE RING.

GRRPPP

RELEASE THE CLASP TO UNDO THE SPELL OF REDUCTION.

PUFF

WHOA!

KA

PWUFF

THE BOOK GOT EVEN BIGGER!

Wooow...

EXCELLENT. IT SHOULD MANAGE TO SUPPORT US BOTH NOW!

DO YOU SEE THE PAGE...

...WITH A LARGE, EMPTY SEAL?!

KR

KR

KRACKLE

KRACKLE

KRACKLE

KRACKLE

KRACKLE

FOUND IT!

WHAT A PERFECT CIRCLE...

DID YOU DRAW THIS, MASTER?

THAT'S RIGHT.

AND IT IS YOU, COCO, WHO WILL FILL IN THE REST.

THE SKILL YOU'VE POLISHED OVER COUNTLESS HOURS.

DRAW WHAT YOU DRAW BEST, COCO.

YOU UNDER-STAND, YES?

HUH? BUT... WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO...

OH!

FILL THE WHOLE PAGE WITH ONE LONG...

MY SPECIALTY.

...PERFECTLY STRAIGHT LINE!

!!

EEK...!

FWIP

LOOM

CLEVER AS ALWAYS, COCO!

PRE-CISELY!

!

LISTEN WELL, COCO.

SHF

TO OUR LEFT IS THE FIRST GATE OF THE TOWER OF TOMES.

TO OUR RIGHT, THE WINDOWWAY AWAITS, AND BEYOND IT, THE GREAT HALL. WHERE OLRUGGIO AND THE OTHERS AWAIT.

I'LL BUY YOU SOME TIME...

...BUT PLEASE, DON'T TAKE TOO LONG TO DECIDE.

FLIT

WHICH WAY YOU FLY IS UP TO YOU.

TWIRL

MASTER?!

YES, COCO.

I AM YOUR MASTER, AND TO ME, YOU ARE MY APPRENTICE ABOVE ALL ELSE.

I WILL PROTECT YOU, WHATEVER PATH YOU CHOOSE!

SO DRAW, COCO! WIELD YOUR WAND AND *DRAW!*

IT'S UP TO ME?

I HAVE TO CHOOSE AND DRAW MY WAY?

WHAT NOW?

MASTER QIFREY ...!

...OR THE TOWER OF TOMES.

THE GREAT HALL...

RETURN TO WHERE I WAS...

...OR FORGE AHEAD.

RIGHT...

...OR LEFT.

I CHOOSE—

Witch Hat Atelier

I HAVE TO CHOOSE. IT'S UP TO ME WHICH WAY TO FLY.

...OR PRESS ON TO THE TOWER OF TOMES?

DO I RETURN TO THE GREAT HALL...

AND I CHOOSE—

AND...

RIGHT OR LEFT, I HAVE TO MAKE THE CALL.

Chapter 38

KER SPLASH

...AH, THE TOWER... IT'S BEEN SO LONG...

SEEMS I'VE GONE A BIT OVER-BOARD...

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I WOULD HAVE LIKED TO HEAR THOSE WORDS.

"BUT THERE IS HOPE."

"THE TOWER DOES NOT CONTAIN AN ANSWER FOR EVERYONE."

THERE IS HOPE.

EVEN IF FINDING IT...

...SOMETIMES MEANS FIRST SINKING TO THE DARKEST DEPTHS OF THE SEA.

FWOOOSH

MASTER QIFREY!!

ROO

HOPE IS...

DOAR

SPLISH

ZRSH

ドス
ドス
ドス

WH...

WHY ARE YOU...?!

I REALIZED I'M NOT READY FOR THE TOWER YET!

WITHOUT YOUR HELP, I WASN'T EVEN GOING TO MAKE IT TO THE ENTRANCE!

BUT I COULDN'T LET YOU STAY BEHIND JUST SO I CAN GET BACK TO THE GREAT HALL, EITHER!

9

I DECIDED ...

...TO FLY STRAIGHT AHEAD!

THAT'S WHY...

...I DIDN'T CHOOSE TO GO RIGHT *OR* LEFT.

SHE CHOSE THE PATH THAT WOULD LET HER SCOOP ME UP?

STRAIGHT AND TRUE.

I DON'T WANT TO GO ON WITHOUT YOU...

...WATCHING OVER ME!

EVERY TIME I SOLVE A NEW PROBLEM...

...I WANT YOU THERE...

...TO TELL ME WHAT A GOOD JOB I'VE DONE!

...NOR RUSHED AHEAD TO HER OWN GOALS.

OF COURSE. SHE NEITHER FLED TO SAFETY...

THIS, COCO...

...IS THE PATH YOU CHOOSE.

SHE FLIES FOR THOSE WHO STAND BEFORE HER—THOSE IN URGENT NEED.

THIS IS THE TYPE OF WITCH YOU ARE.

TNP

LET US RETURN TOGETHER.

WE WILL GO BACK AND STUDY SIDE BY SIDE.

AND IF THAT IS SO...

THEN IT IS DECIDED.

FWUMF

ALL OF US.

AT HOME IN MY ATELIER.

YES! I'D LOVE THAT!

I HOPE YOU CAN HEAR ME, OLRUGGIO!

CAST IT! YOU KNOW THE ONE!

!

GRAB

JUST MAKE SURE YOU KEEP CLEAR!

YOU'RE GONNA GET US *ALL* KILLED!

OH, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD...!

TUG

HERE? ***NOW?!!***

YOU'VE GOTTA BE...?

GRAH

GRAH

FWING

PLISH

PLASH

PLASH

TTTT...!
FLASH!
KR
VOOM
SZZ
ZZZZ
ウウウ
!
THE WATER! IT'S HOT!
BOILING HOT! WATCH OUT!

NOW FLY, STRAIGHT TO THE WINDOW-WAY!

ROOOOAR

HURRY UP! I'M SHUTTING THIS THING...

...AS SOON AS YOU'RE IN!

GRRRKK

SHWOOOM

FWRSH

PLISH

HUSH

SLINK

WHIRL

WHEEEW
はあああ〜

HFFぜ"
PFFはー
ぜー
HFF
PFF

TOO FAR. YOU TOOK IT *TOO FAR* THIS TIME!

GRRR GRR

YOU SEEMED TO HAVE A PLAN WHEN YOU *HEADED* TO HER!

WHAT WERE YOU THINKING, GROUPING YOURSELVES INTO *A SINGLE* TARGET?!

YOU'RE PERFECTLY ABLE TO BUY A LITTLE TIME AND FLY BACK ON YOUR OWN!

WHY DIDN'T YOU SEND COCO BACK FIRST?!

GRRR GRRR

ほか ROASTY

ほか TOASTY

ぼぉ!!

FWOOOOM

Straight ahead!

POOF

N-N-N-NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, THAT *DOES* SEEM LIKE SOMETHING MASTER QIFREY WOULD BE ABLE TO...

Oh, dear... Did I maybe do something kinda, sorta... entirely unnecessary?

GASP

ぼぉっ!!

!

TOAST ほか

ROAST ほか

YES, WELL... ABOUT THAT...

THANK YOU, COCO.

EVEN SO...

I'M GLAD YOU FLEW TO ME.

I WAS HAPPY TO HAVE YOU RESCUE ME.

ME, TOO.

I WAS SO RELIEVED WHEN YOU SHOWED UP.

IT'S ONLY NATURAL. YOU MUST HAVE BEEN SO WORRIED.

ALL THAT MATTERS IS THAT YOU'RE SAFE NOW.

SLUMP

I'M SORRY FOR TRYING TO GO TO THE TOWER OF TOMES ON MY OWN.

AHHH... AHEM!

...

Oh, I beg to differ.

Yes, yes. All's well that ends well.

Thank goodness.

I'M SORRY, BUT I...

LORD BELDARUIT ...

HUSH.

NO NEED FOR WORDS. I CAN SEE IT WELL ENOUGH MYSELF.

WHOM YOU LEARN FROM AND WHAT YOU DRAW...

TO WHENCE YOU SET YOUR SIGHTS AND YOUR MEANS TO GET THERE...

ALL OF THESE ARE FOR YOU TO DECIDE.

ERM, BELDARUIT ...?

IF THIS IS HOW YOU WOULD HAVE THINGS BE...

...THEN FAR BE IT FROM ME, OR ANYONE ELSE, TO COMPEL YOU OTHER-WISE.

And that's another thing! What gives you the right to try and poach someone else's apprentice?! Unbelievable!

But...! I was just...! You don't have to Yell-da-ruit!

I had no idea Master Qifrey could get that upset...

OH, MY DARLING FORMER APPRENTICE! NOT SO HARSH! ♡

IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT THIS WHOLE INCIDENT WAS BECAUSE OF THE THINGS YOU TOLD COCO!

...

...

SHF

REMEMBER, COCO, ALL APPRENTICES HAVE THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE THEIR MASTER.

ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE HAPPY WITH THE WAY THINGS ARE?

...I WOULD HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE BUT TO WANDER ON, LED ONLY BY DESPAIR.

...THAT THERE ISN'T ANY HOPE...

'CAUSE IF HE'D SAID THERE ARE THINGS MAGIC CAN'T DO...

I FELT THAT WAY BECAUSE HE TOLD ME THERE'S HOPE.

"I WAS SO RELIEVED WHEN YOU SHOWED UP."

THAT'S WHY...

I AM.

...YES.

I'M VERY GLAD IT WAS MASTER QIFREY WHO TOOK ME IN.

...

I SEE.

REALLY... I MEAN IT.

...YES. OF COURSE.

HERE. JUST REMEMBER, THE TWO OF US AREN'T DONE TALKING.

トン
TMP

AND TALK WE SHALL, ONCE WE HAVE RETURNED...

...TO MY ATELIER.

BECAUSE RIGHT NOW...

...I WANT NOTHING MORE THAN TO GET BACK HOME.

I UNDERSTAND PREDIS QIFREY HAS DEPARTED, LORD BELDARUIT.
AH. RILIPHIN...

I WISHED TO SEE MY FORMER APPRENTICE OFF IN PERSON.

WORRY NOT. I AM FEELING QUITE SPRY TODAY.

YOU DIDN'T COME TO THE GARDEN AS SMOKE TODAY.

I WAS SURPRISED WHEN YOU WEREN'T IN YOUR CHAMBERS.

PLEASE DON'T PUSH YOURSELF. YOU HAVE YOUR HEALTH TO THINK OF.

...MOUTH CLOSED AND EYES AVERTED IN HER TIME OF NEED.

SHE HAS NO USE FOR A WEAK BROTHER LIKE ME...

...YOU JEST.

IT HAS BEEN A GREAT WHILE SINCE YOU LAST SAW YOUR SISTER RICHEH, NO?

A SHAME YOU DIDN'T JOIN US.

HMM. BUT TO MY EYES, YOU ARE NEITHER WEAK NOR LACKING COURAGE.

AFTER ALL, YOU'VE FOUND THE STRENGTH TO COME OUT HERE TO THE ARGENTGARD, HAVE YOU NOT?

I GAVE UP MY RIGHT TO SEE HER WHEN I FAILED TO HELP...

...IT IS QUIET HERE, AND VISITORS ARE FEW.

ONLY BECAUSE...

DO YOU KNOW THIS TALE?

THE MIGHTY SILVERWOOD, IT IS SAID, ONLY TAKES ROOT IN PLACES IT KNOWS IT WILL FIND TRUE COMFORT.

BUT, THAT ONE REQUIREMENT FILLED, IT WILL GROW IN ANY CLIME, FROM BARREN WASTELAND AT EDGE OF WORLD, TO HERE, ON BED OF DEEP, DEEP SEA.

LEGEND HOLDS THAT IT IS A MYSTICAL TREE, ABLE TO LIVE WHEREVER IT PLEASES.

IT CHOOSES THE PLACE WHERE IT WILL LIVE?

THAT SOUNDS VERY MUCH...

...LIKE WHAT A *PERSON* MIGHT DO.

...

I'M SURE...

*...ON HIS DEPARTURE, I OVERHEARD HIM SPEAK OF THE ATELIER AS HIS **HOME**.*

IF HE TRULY SEES IT AS A PLACE...

...TO CALL HIS OWN— A PLACE THAT BRINGS COMFORT AND SOLACE...

...I PRAY HE KNOWS BETTER THAN TO TEAR IT DOWN WITH HIS OWN HANDS...

...AND LOSE THAT WHICH HE HAS FINALLY MANAGED TO FIND.

DID SHE JUST WELCOME HERSELF HOME?

YEAH. SHE DID.

WELCOME BACK, SWEET TETIA!

I'M HOME, DEAR ATELIER!

TETI-TO-

BE-HOME!

HEY...

WHERE'S MASTER QIFREY?

IT *IS* KIND OF ODD, HUH. WE WEREN'T AWAY *THAT* LONG.

TWIRL

AHHH! IT FEELS LIKE WE WERE GONE FOR *AGES!*

TWIRL

TWIRLY

THEN I GUESS MASTER OLLY MUST BE...

...WITH HIM, TOO.

OH.

SAID HE WAS GOING TO CHECK ON THE VEGETABLE GARDEN.

HE STEPPED OUTSIDE A WHILE AGO.

KRNCH

I SUPPOSE YOU'D LIKE TO PICK UP...

...WHERE WE LEFT OFF?

Witch Hat Atelier

Chapter 39

RETRACING EVENTS AT THE GREAT HALL...

A FEW DAYS PRIOR —

HMPH. QIFREY'S CONFINED TO BED...

...AND THE GIRLS ARE BUSY WITH BELDARUIT'S MAKE-UP TEST.

BUSTLE

BUSTLE

BUSTLE

I CAME OVER TO DEEPWATER CASTLE THINKING I'D GET A BITE TO EAT...

...BUT...

I SHOULD'VE KNOWN BETTER...

...THAN TO SHOW UP AT LUNCHTIME.

CHATTER

CHATTER

GUESS I'LL FIND SOME OTHER PLACE TO BURN A CLOCK MARK OR TWO.

KRRSHNK

JO

LT

IT'D BE A REAL HASSLE IF WORD SPREAD 'ROUND THE GREAT HALL THAT OLRUGGIO'S B—

AAAAAACK!

AH! FORGIVE ME!

IT WAS NOT MY INTENT TO STARTLE YOU!

ニュ

ㄉ

ㄉ

ㄉ

ZASHAH

...without using Sylph Shoes!

He jumped down a whole story...

HOW SPLENDID TO SEE YOU BACK AT THE HALL...

...PREDIS OLRUGGIO!

WHEN I REALIZED YOU WERE HERE, I SIMPLY COULD NOT HELP BUT LEAP DOWN!

UGHHH. LISTEN, HIEHART...

...WE TALKED ABOUT THIS "PREDIS" BUSINESS.

...IF YOU'D ACCEPT ME AS YOUR APPRENTICE!

WHY, EVEN AT THIS AGE, I'D BE *HONORED* TO START ALL OVER AND STUDY UNDER *YOU*...

TALK ABOUT COMING ON STRONG...

COMPLETELY IRRELEVANT! WHAT MATTERS IS THAT *YOU* ARE MY PREDIS AT HEART!

YOU'RE HELPIN' ME OUT AS AN ASSISTANT. IT'S NOT A BOND OF BROTHERHOOD. WE'RE NOT CONNECTED BY APPRENTICESHIP.

すりすり
2-ZWM

すり,
ZWMMM

We didn't even study under the same Master!

EVEN IF I DID, I'D PREFER ONE WHO KNOWS HOW TO BE *QUIET*.

TRUST ME, I HAVE *NO* INTENTION OF TAKING ON AN APPRENTICE.

NO NEED! I'M ALREADY HERE!

TMP TMP TMP TMP

YOU ARE CORRECT!

SHALL I SUMMON HER?!

NO, THAT'S... NOT THE POINT I'M TRYING TO MAKE.

AND HEY, DON'T YOU HAVE AN APPRENTICE OF YOUR *OWN*?!

AH, JUJY! IMPECCABLE TIMING!

I KNOW BETTER THAN TO LEAVE MY TEACHER TOO LONG WITHOUT SUPERVISION.

?

ALTHOUGH, I MUST SAY, I'M QUITE HAPPY TO FIND YOU HERE AT THE HALL.

APOLOGIES FOR MASTER HIEHART'S CONDUCT, MISTER OLRUGGIO.

ACTUALLY, I WAS JUST ABOUT TO SEND YOU AN URGENT LETTER. IT'S ABOUT A JOB WE ASSISTED YOU WITH BEFORE!

ASTUTE AS EVER!

I'VE GOT A *REAL* BAD FEELING ABOUT WHAT'S COMING NEXT.

OH, NO. DON'T TELL ME IT'S...

URGENT LETTER... JOB FROM BEFORE...

ZN

SH

PLEASE, ACCOMPANY US.

OUR PATRON AWAITS AT MISTCALL CASTLE.

POP

POP

POP

NOW?

WHAT ABOUT QIFREY AND THE KIDS?

I GUESS I CAN ASK BELDARUIT AND SINOCIA TO KEEP AN EYE ON THEM...

POP

POP

POP

!

FINE. LET'S GO.

BLUE, WITCHES! I WANT IT BLUE!

MISTCALL CASTLE, SEAT OF THE MARQUISATE OF CLADD

YES! YOU HEARD ME!

THIS! THE MAGIC YOU CAST TO MAKE THE FLOOR OF MY BANQUET HALL GLOW!

UH... BLUE, LORD CLADD?

I'M SURE YOU'RE ACQUAINTED WITH THE CREST OF MY GLORIOUS MARQUISATE—AND ITS COLOR, BLUE AS THE SKY AT DUSK!

MY DAUGHTER'S WEDDING APPROACHES. IT WOULD BE A DISSERVICE IF THE FLOOR DID NOT SHINE THAT VERY SAME BLUE!

BUT...MY LORD, I'M TOLD THE CEREMONY IS BUT DAYS AWAY.

EVEN IF WE WERE TO BEGIN WORK ON THE HALL NOW...

NO EXCUSES, WITCH! I AM *WELL AWARE* OF THE THINGS YOU DO...

...AS YOU CONDUCT YOUR RITUALS AT *MY* BEHEST!

!

Geez. That's what you're talking about.

FOR A SECOND, I THOUGHT HE MEANT HE'D DISCOVERED THE SECRET OF **CASTING.**

Here. Use this if you get cold at night.

It's the witch with the goatee! Hahaha!

Oh, you charmer. ♥

DID YOU THINK I WOULD NOT DISCOVER YOUR EXPLOITS? LEAVING *MY* REQUESTS UNATTENDED...

...AS YOU SNEAK OUT TO THE CASTLE TOWN TO PROVIDE THE COMMONERS YOUR SERVICES FOR *FREE*?!

Thanks! You're a real help!

Get off of me.

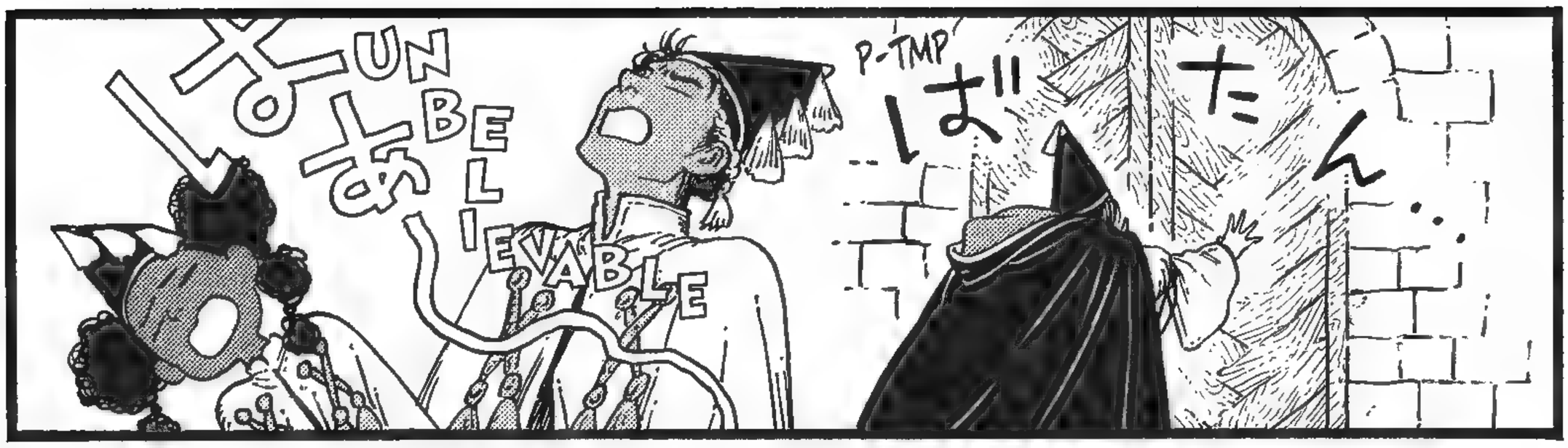
I'VE SUPPLIED PLENTY OF GOLD TO THE GREAT HALL'S TREASURY.

I DEMAND THAT MY WILL BE DONE!

IF YOU HAVE TIME FOR SUCH FRIVOLITIES, I SEE NO REASON FOR YOU TO COMPLAIN NOW!

CREEEAK

IS IT NOT THE WITCHES' *DUTY* TO USE THEIR MAGIC TO FULFILL THE DESIRES OF ALL THE WORLD'S PEOPLE?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P-TMP
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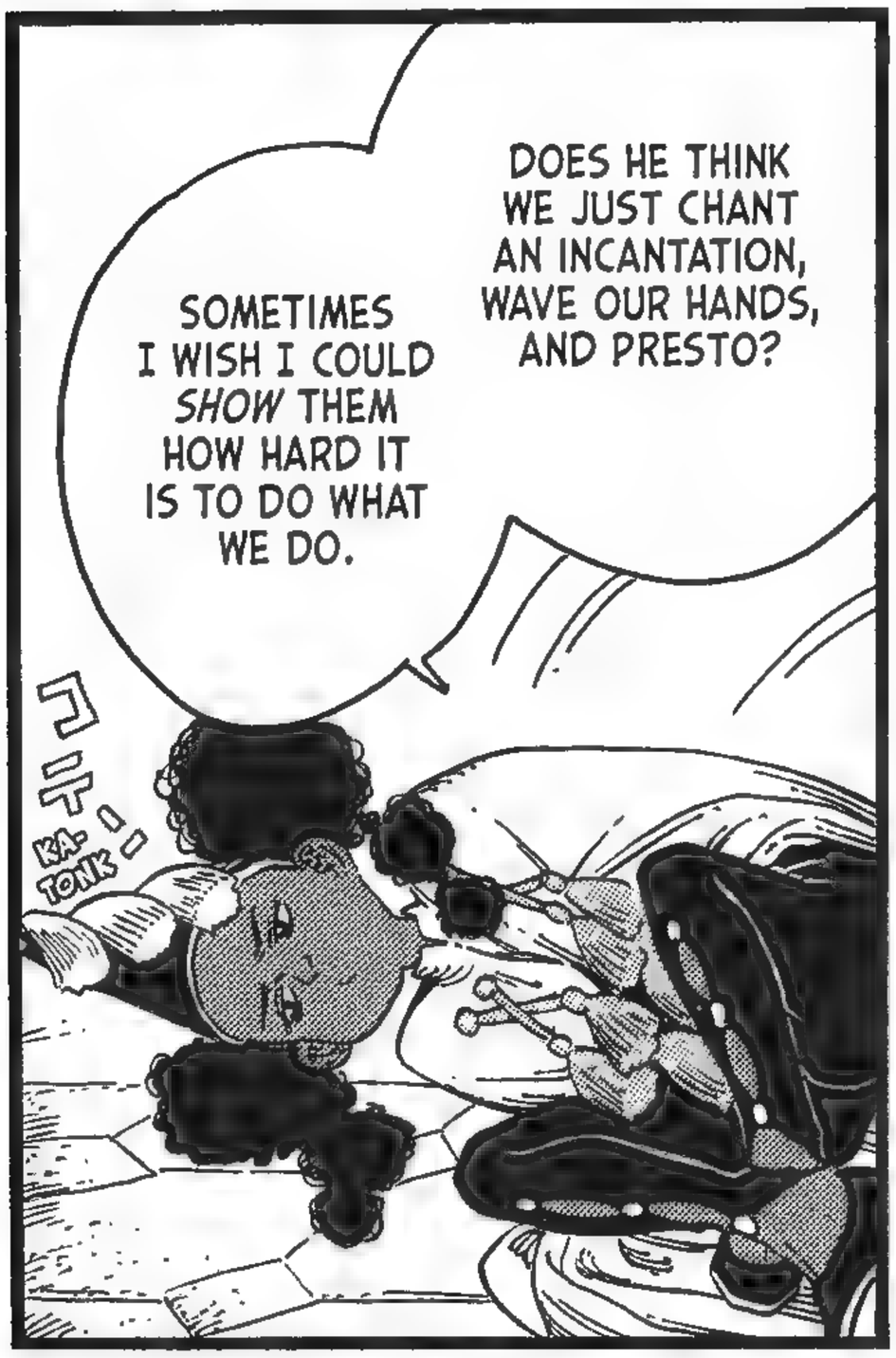
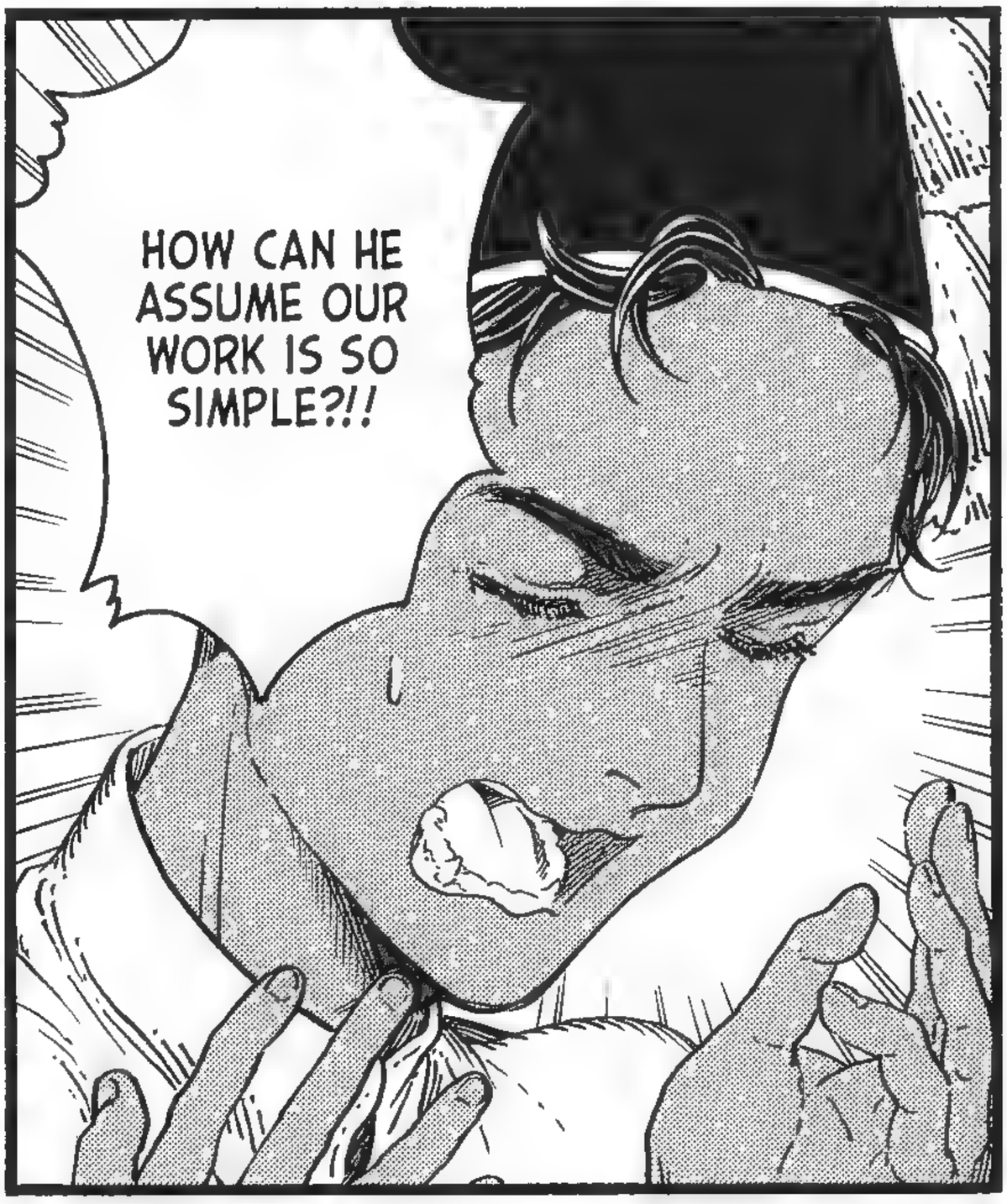

SOMETIMES I WISH I COULD *SHOW* THEM HOW HARD IT IS TO DO WHAT WE DO.
DOES HE THINK WE JUST CHANT AN INCANTATION, WAVE OUR HANDS, AND PRESTO?
カ-トン
KA-TONK


HOW CAN HE ASSUME OUR WORK IS SO SIMPLE?!!

LOOK AT ALL THIS!
WE HAVE TO RETILE THIS *ENTIRE* FLOOR?

HEY. PRINCIPLES. VIOLATION. SHUSH.

IT'S JUST HARD NOT TO GRUMBLE.
ふえぇ
GNGHH

FWIP

I'VE GOT AN IDEA OR TWO ABOUT HOW WE MIGHT MANAGE THIS.

ONLY TROUBLE IS, IT'S GONNA REQUIRE THE COOPERATION OF A CERTAIN INDIVIDUAL.

YEAH, WELL...

I ALREADY TOLD YOU, I *DON'T* WANT AN APPRENTICE!

Z-ZWOOM

ASTOUNDING! HOW COULD I HAVE EVER DOUBTED?!

TRULY, "PREDIS" IS NOT ENOUGH! ALLOW ME TO STUDY UNDER YOU!

...

HEY, WHY *ARE* YOU SO AGAINST TAKING ON AN APPRENTICE, ANYWAY?

ISN'T IT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EVERY ADULT WITCH TO HELP RAISE THE NEXT GENERATION?

...WITHOUT *ANY* HESITATION, YOU'VE GOT NO BUSINESS TAKING ON AN APPRENTICE.

LOOK, WHEN SOMETHING HAPPENS, AND YOU GOTTA WEIGH YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AS A MASTER...

...AGAINST WHATEVER COMES UP, IF YOU'RE NOT THE TYPE TO CHOOSE THE FORMER...

...

AHH. SURE. SOUNDS REASONABLE ENOUGH.

...I CAN SEE THAT.

AFTER ALL, ME, AND MASTER HIEHART, AND *ALL* WITCHES... WE'RE ALL JUST PEOPLE!

BUT...IT DEPENDS ON WHAT YOU'RE WEIGHING YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AGAINST.

IF YOU'VE GOT TWO THINGS THAT ARE SO IMPORTANT IT'S HARD TO CHOOSE, I SAY, FORGET THE SCALE!

I'D ASK FOR HELP FROM A FRIEND SO I COULD STAY ON TOP OF 'EM BOTH, WITHOUT LEANING TO EITHER SIDE!

WELL SAID, JUJY!

WHAT AN INSPIRING APPRENTICE! WHY, PERHAPS I OUGHT TO STUDY UNDER *YOU!*

'CAUSE EVEN WHEN I BECOME A MASTER, I WANNA KEEP LIVING MY OWN LIFE...

...AND I WANNA OFFER MY FRIENDS A HELPING HAND WHEN THEY'RE IN NEED, TOO!

RUMMAGE

All right, now. Just caaalm down.

I GUESS IN THE END, DESPITE ALL THAT STUFF HE SAID...

...QIFREY DID CHOOSE TO PROTECT THE KIDS.

HEH. OFFER A...

...HELPING HAND, HUH?

OH! I DIDN'T REALIZE IT WAS YOU...

YEAH?

ギィ

CREEEAK

KNOCK KNOCK

MY APOLOGIES, SIR WITCH, FOR THE GREAT TROUBLE MY FATHER HAS IMPOSED.

LADY MIIA.

...

MY BETROTHED HAILS FROM NOUIHL, YOU SEE, AND THE TILES ARE MY FATHER'S WAY OF ASSERTING WHICH IS THE GREATER REALM.

...AREN'T GONNA LOOK THEIR BEST BATHED IN BLUE LIGHT.

THE ROBES YOUR FIANCÉ WILL WEAR TO THE CEREMONY...

RIGHT. NOUIHL'S CREST IS A DEEP AND FIERY SUNSET RED.

...AND NOUIHL LOOK THE LESSER LAND.

AND WHILE HE'S AT IT, HE EMBARRASSES THE WITCHES BY REQUESTING AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK.

I FIGURED THIS MIGHT BE THE CASE.

HE WANTS THE LADY TO SHINE RADIANT, THAT THE MIGHT OF THE MARQUISATE BE APPARENT...

THE MAN I'VE CHOSEN TO WED CARES NOT FOR SUCH THINGS—A FACT THAT DOES NOT ENDEAR HIM TO MY FATHER.

MY FATHER IS OF A TRADITIONAL MIND. HE LIKES TO MAKE CLEAR WHO STANDS ABOVE AND BELOW.

AND HE DECIDES TO BADGER HIS DAUGHTER ABOUT IT ON HER **WEDDING DAY...?**

Meddlesome old man...

I WILL SPEAK TO HIM. YOU ARE FREE TO GO.

DO NOT WORRY ABOUT THE TILES.

DO NOT EXERT YOURSELVES FOR HIS SAKE.

SO... THERE'S REALLY NO NEED FOR THIS.

THE REQUEST FOR OUR SERVICES COMES FROM THE MARQUISATE HIMSELF.

I'M SORRY, MY LADY, BUT I CANNOT OBLIGE.

SHF スー

HOWEVER... IT WOULD GRIEVE ME TO DISAPPOINT YOU.

AFTER ALL, WE ARE WITCHES. WE SEE TO THE PEOPLE'S DESIRES.

IF YOU WOULD BE SO KIND AS TO ASSIST US...

...I BELIEVE I COULD ILLUMINATE THE WAY TO *EVERYONE'S* SATISFACTION.

PRESUMPTUOUS WITCHES! ON AND ON ABOUT HOW MUCH WORK THIS WILL BE...

...ONLY TO FINISH IT ALL IN HALF A DAY!

FINISHED, YOU SAY?

CLACK

CLACK

HM?

FW

WELL? SHOW ME!

AM

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?

THE FLOOR...

IT'S PRECISELY AS IT WAS BEFORE!

THE KNIGHTS STANDING GUARD AT THE HALL'S ENTRANCE...

...ARE HARDLY THE FOCUS OF THE EVENING'S EVENT.

WHAT DID YOU SAY?!

THIS WILL SUFFICE, MY LORD.

...

?

SWSH

...ALONG THE FRINGE.

NEITHER ARE THE GUESTS, WHO WILL DANCE HERE...

ONLY ONE PORTION BEGS TO BE BATHED IN BLUE...

...SO THAT ONE PERSON MIGHT CAPTURE THE IMAGINATION.

AND THAT SPOT IS HERE—THE SITE OF THE LADY'S APPEARANCE, AS SHE STANDS AT THE CENTER OF ALL OF CLADD.

WE ONLY HAD TO REDRAW THE TILES AT THE CENTER OF THE HALL...

...AND NOW, NOT ONLY DOES LADY MIIA GET HER CHANCE TO SHINE...

...

LOOK! IT SHINES ONLY WHERE LADY MIIA SETS HER FEET!

OH, HOW LOVELY! HOW EPHEMERAL!

...BUT WHEN THE DANCE ENDS, AND SHE STEPS AWAY...

...THE RED OF HER NEW GROOM'S ATTIRE WILL RETAIN ALL ITS SPLENDOR.

INGENIOUS. NOTHING BUT THE BEST FROM PREDIS OLRUGGIO!

ONE IS NEVER OBLIGED TO DANCE SIMPLY FOR BEING BROUGHT TO THE BALLROOM, MY LADY. DANCE AT THE PLACES AND TIMES YOU PLEASE.

AND WHEN YOU DO NOT DESIRE THE STAGE, SIMPLY STEP AWAY.

THE LIGHT WILL REMAIN...

...TO BATHE ALL WHO WATCH IN ITS WARM AND GENTLE GLOW.

YES. IT'S PERFECT.

WHY, I WOULD EVEN KEEP YOU HERE IN COURT.

AND YOU, MY LADY? ARE YOU ALSO SATISFIED?

YOU CERTAINLY KNOW HOW TO PUT ON A SHOW, SIR WITCH.

JUST LOOK HOW HIS FACE FILLS WITH PRIDE!

MY FATHER IS STUNNED TO SILENCE.

I'M TOLD THAT IN AGES PAST, THE GREATEST MONARCHS KEPT WITCHES AT THEIR SIDES...

...THAT THEY MIGHT LEAD THEIR PEOPLE WITH THE AID OF SAGE ADVICE, WISDOM, AND MAGIC.

IT WOULD BE HEARTEN-ING...

...HAD I SOMEONE LIKE YOU AT MY SIDE WHEN IT COMES TIME FOR ME TO RULE MY FAMILY'S LANDS.

I AM HONORED. BUT THE DAYS OF YORE WERE A TIME OF STRIFE AND WAR.

...I SEE.

WELL, ON THAT POINT, SIR WITCH...

...WE ARE IN FULL ACCORD.

NO WITCH WISHES TO SEE THE ERRORS OF THE PAST REPEATED.

WE SEEK ONLY A FUTURE FULL OF HOPE.

W- WE'LL BE TAKING OUR LEAVE!

WHILE YOU'RE HERE, I DO HAVE A FEW OTHER ROOMS THAT—

MORE THAN I COULD HAVE HOPED!

WELL DONE, WITCH!

すたこら TIME TO はっさーこーっ!

VAMOOSE!

WAIT!

SURELY YOU NEEDN'T HURRY AWAY SO SOON!

LADY MIIA SEEMED A *LOT* MORE REASONABLE.

WE GOTTA BE MORE CAUTIOUS ABOUT TAKING REQUESTS FROM THE MARQUISATE.

I GOTTA BE MORE CAREFUL.

CAN'T BELIEVE I DIDN'T NOTICE BEING *SPIED ON* WHEN I VISITED THE CASTLE TOWN...

!

HELLO THERE, WITCH!

GOTTA SAY, I NEVER COULD'VE IMAGINED THE DIFFERENCE A LITTLE EXTRA LIGHT WOULD MAKE!

CLAMOR ガヤ!!

BEEN MEANIN' TO THANK YA FOR THE GLOWIN' STONES YOU LAID IN THE ALLEYWAYS!

WE'RE SEEIN' A LOT LESS OF THOSE RUFFIANS ON THE STREETS AT NIGHT!

FEWER THIEVES, TOO!

THANK YOU KINDLY!

MUCH OBLIGED, WITCH!

NO NEED FOR THANKS.

IF ANYTHING, FINDING WAYS TO HELP THE TOWNSPEOPLE IS OUR REAL CALLING.

BEING A WITCH ISN'T ABOUT DECORATING CASTLES.

!

SLAM ドン!

YOU THERE! WITCH!

HE'S NOT LIKE THE OTHER CHILDREN.

HIS EARS ARE REAL SHARP— SO SHARP, THE SOUNDS AROUND HIM CAUSE HIM PAIN!

TAKE THIS BOY WITH YOU!

I THINK HE MIGHTA BEEN BORN WITH THE GIFT!

I CAN ASSURE YOU, HE'S JUST AN ORDINARY BOY.

I'M AFRAID WE CAN'T—

PLEASE, TAKE HIM WITH YOU. MAKE HIM AN APPRENTICE!

I BEG YOU!

WHILE SOME HAVE THE LUXURY...

...TO STEP FROM THE STAGE WHEN THEY CARE NOT TO DANCE...

...TO CHOOSE WHERE THEY WILL STAND.

...OTHERS ARE NOT AFFORDED THE MEANS...

THEN...

AT LEAST TEACH HIM HOW TO CONTROL HIS POWERS!

PLEASE! HE NEEDS *HELP!*

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

GWP

IF YOU TAKE HIS HAND, YOU VIOLATE THE PRINCIPLES.

FWIP

AH... FOR A SECOND, I THOUGHT...

SWIP

...I'M JUST OFFERIN' TO MAKE A SPELLSCARF TO CUT OUT SOME OF THE NOISE HE HEARS.

THIS SHOULD MAKE LIFE A LITTLE EASIER.

SORRY THERE ISN'T MORE I CAN DO.

AND AT THE HEALING SPIRE, WHAT HAD HE BEEN ABOUT TO SAY?

WHAT ARE YOU KEEPING FROM ME, QIFREY?

...WHEN HE TOOK COCO'S HAND IN VIOLATION OF THE PRINCIPLES?

WHAT WAS RUNNING THROUGH HIS MIND...

I SUPPOSE YOU'D LIKE TO PICK UP...

...WHERE WE LEFT OFF?

OLLY.

YEAH.

SO START TALKIN'.

OUT WITH IT. THE WHOLE STORY.

AND ONCE YOU'RE DONE, THERE'S ONLY ONE THING I'M ASKIN'.

I WANT YOU...

...TO LET ME *HELP* YOU, QIFREY!

Witch Hat Atelier

Chapter 40

...

I HAVE TO ADMIT...

OH, I *AM.*

...I WASN'T EXPECTING YOU TO RESPOND LIKE THAT.

I THOUGHT...

...PERHAPS YOU MIGHT BE ANGRY WITH ME.

I'M ANGRY ABOUT HOW YOU LEFT YOUR APPRENTICES IN DANGER. HOW YOU WEREN'T BY THEIR SIDE WHEN THEY NEEDED YOU MOST!

YEAH. THAT'S RIGHT. I'M FURIOUS!

I'M ANGRY ABOUT HOW YOU KEPT PUSHING YOURSELF WHEN YOU WERE INJURED, AND HOW YOU HAD ME SO WORRIED, I THOUGHT I MIGHT FAINT!

THAT'S MY OWN FAULT, FOR NOT BEING SOMEONE YOU CAN TURN TO.

I'M ANGRY AT *MYSELF* FOR THAT PART.

...NO. FORGET THAT.

AND I'M ALSO ANGRY...

...THAT YOU DIDN'T THINK TO CONSULT ME—

BUT THAT'S NOT THE POINT, IS IT?

YOU HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING WRONG.

!!! FWSH !!

NO! YOU MISUNDER-STAND!

...AND MOST OF MY TIME IS TIED UP MAKIN' CONTRAPTIONS AND HELPIN' PEOPLE.

I KNOW. I'M THE WATCHFUL EYE FOR YOUR ATELIER...

AND WHEN YOU NEED HELP, I'M THERE TO OFFER A HAND.

I'M THERE TO STOP YOU WHEN YOU START SOMETHIN' RECKLESS.

BUT I'M ALSO YOUR GOOD FRIEND.

OH, OLRUG-GIO...

SO IT SHOULDN'T MATTER WHAT THE PROBLEM IS. I CAN ALWAYS HELP YOU OUT...

...AS A FRIEND, RIGHT?

WHY...ARE YOU WILLING TO GO SO FAR FOR ME...?

AND DON'T YOU FORGET IT.

HUP!

HEY. THAT'S JUST THE KINDA GUY I AM.

IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW SHE GOT HERE.

COCO WANTS TO STUDY UNDER YOU.

AND THE REASON SHE DOES IS BECAUSE YOU'VE BEEN A GOOD TEACHER TO HER.

DON'T ABUSE THAT TRUST.

JUST KEEP BEIN' THE SAME MASTER QIFREY YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN... GENTLE AND DEPENDABLE. FOR ALL FOUR OF 'EM.

AND IN EXCHANGE ...

...I'LL STICK WITH YOU, JUST LIKE I STUCK WITH THE QIFREY I KNEW BACK THEN.

...

TAP

ッ

ッ!

NO MORE HIDING THE TRUTH.

I WANNA KNOW WHY YOU'RE PICKING UP THE SEARCH...

...YOU ABANDONED AT THE TOWER ALL THOSE YEARS AGO.

I'M NO MATCH FOR YOU, AM I...

...OLD FRIEND?

I QUITE LIKE IT HERE, YOU KNOW?

FWUMF

7

7

...WITH DAYS SO CALM, YOU'D ALMOST THINK THEM DULL.

IT'S PEACEFUL ...

...AND SERENE...

WHAT I MEAN IS, I'M HAPPY HERE.

I'M CONTENT. FULFILLED.

I FEEL AS THOUGH I'M SUSPENDED IN ILLUSION—LIKE A TRANCE SET UPON ME BY POLLEN FROM THE SPECTRE-SMOKE TREE.

AND I LOVE TEACHING THE FOUR OF THEM MAGIC...

...AND WATCHING THEM LEARN AND GROW.

VWOOSH

AND THAT...

...IS PRECISELY WHY I CANNOT LET IT GO.

...!

OF COURSE. THE LEFT EYE, TOO...

TNP

?!

THE STATE OF MY LEFT EYE IS KNOWN ONLY TO US TWO.

I HAVE NOT SPOKEN OF MY CONDITION TO ANYONE. NOT EVEN BELDARUIT.

THE WITCH WHO STOLE MY PAST...

...WILL NOT STOP THERE.

HE WOULD TAKE FROM ME *MY FUTURE* AS WELL.

IT BEGAN A FEW YEARS AGO.

TMP

LIGHTS AROUND ME SEEMED HARSHER THAN BEFORE.

AND AT TIMES... IT ACHES. A DEEP AND SEARING PAIN.

FWUSH

THE SPELL ON MY LENS SPARES ME FROM THE BRIGHTEST LIGHTS...

TMP

...BUT IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME.

THAT IS WHY, WHILE I STILL HAVE STRENGTH LEFT TO CAST...

...I WANT TO DO WHAT I KNOW MUST BE DONE.

THE MAGIC THE BRIMMED CAPS LABOR TO UNLOCK IN THE DARK OF THRISTAS... THE PLAN THEY FORMULATE...

IT *MUST* BE STOPPED!

I MUST RECLAIM THE RIGHT EYE THEY'VE STOLEN...

...AND *DESTROY* THE THING BEFORE THE PLAN IS KNOWN TO ALL!

I THOUGHT EVERYTHING FROM BEFORE THE GREAT HALL WAS A BLANK.

THAT ALL YOUR MEMORIES GOT—

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

THEIR *PLAN*, YOU SAY?

...THAT LAST ADVENTURE WE EMBARKED UPON AS BOYS?

DO YOU REMEMBER ...

...CONTAINS A COPY OF EVERY TEXT IN THIS WORLD.

THE TOWER OF TOMES...

SURE. WE ATTEMPTED THE TOWER.

AND ONLY *YOU* MADE IT INSIDE.

...EVEN THE HASTILY SCRAWLED MEMOS...

BUT THE DIARIES, THE RECORDS...

NOT JUST THE ONES BOUND AS BOOKS.

FEW OF THE WRITINGS COMPOSED IN THRISTAS HAD REMAINED—THEY'D BEEN CAREFULLY DISPOSED OF WITH MAGIC.

BUT I DID FIND ONE NOTE—A SCRAP, REALLY. AND I REMEMBERED.

THUS ITS OTHER NAME—"THE TOWER OF MEMORIES."

I WAS THE TRIAL RUN.

THEY WERE TESTING A NEW TYPE OF FORBIDDEN SPELL.

A NEW POSSIBILITY, OVERGROWN WITH MAYHEM...

...SCOOPED FORTH FROM THE SEEDS OF SOWN CHAOS.

THAT'S...!

AND THE GREAT COST WHICH HOPE DECLARES ...

WH... WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? THEY'RE NOT AFTER THE SPELLS OF OLD?

THEY'RE AFTER SOMETHING *NEW?!*

OLLY...

...IS NONE OTHER THAN... DESPAIR.

I DO BELIEVE YOU WOULD STILL HELP ME, KNOWING ALL THERE IS TO KNOW.

P.LICK

YOU HAVE A GENTLE SOUL.

THAT'S WHY YOU CHOSE TO FORGIVE ME YET AGAIN.

WHAT'RE YOU...?!

NO! DON'T TELL ME THIS IS...!

SKRIT

I'M SORRY.

BUT I CANNOT HAVE THAT.

FORGIVE ME, OLD FRIEND.

zzz

zzz

I'D BELIEVED MYSELF QUITE ADEPT AT CONCEALING THE TRUTH...

...BUT THEN AGAIN, I SUPPOSE YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN SKILLED AT SUSSING IT OUT.

FSS

SH

DO NOT WORRY. YOU SHALL ONLY FORGET THE THINGS PERTAINING TO MY SECRET.

BE THE MASTER QIFREY I'VE ALWAYS BEEN, HM?

IF ONLY I COULD.

MASTER QIFREY ...!

...I WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE THAT, TOO.

BELIEVE ME...

WOULDN'T YOU SAY IT'S TIME FOR DIIIINNER?

!!!

MASTER QIFREY ...?

HAHA!

HEHE!

YOUR INJURIES AREN'T BOTHERING YOU, ARE THEY?

HUH? DID MASTER OLLY FALL ASLEEP?

IS... EVERYTHING OKAY?

LURCH

DON'T YOU KNOW BETTER? YOU'LL CATCH COLD LIKE THAT!

GWUH?!

WAS I... WAS I SLEEPING?

...OF COURSE.

MY APOLOGIES, GIRLS.

!

LOOK!

...SOME-THING IMPOR-TANT...

I KNOW IT WAS...

WHAT WERE WE TALKING ABOUT JUST NOW?

MRMNGH ...

YOU MUST BE EXHAUSTED. LET'S GO RELAX INSIDE!

WOOOW...

LOOK AT ALL THESE PASSAGE STARS!

HOW BEAUTIFUL ...!

IT FEELS LIKE SOMETHING WONDERFUL IS ABOUT TO BEGIN!

SURE DON'T! WE'RE SO LUCKY!

WOW. YOU DON'T OFTEN SEE...

...THIS MANY CROSSING DOWN ALL AT ONCE.

WHAT AN AMAZING NIGHT, HUH, MASTER?

?

YOU DON'T KNOW HOW RIGHT YOU ARE! SILVER EVE IS ALMOST HERE!

TETI-
TA-DA-
DA-DA
DAH!
IT'S THE BIGGEST, MOST WONDROUS FESTIVAL OF DREAMS. A GATHERING OF WITCHES FROM ALL THE REALMS!
WHEN STARS ABOVE MAKE PASSAGE TO LAND, THE SEASON FOR SILVER EVE IS CLOSE AT HAND!
IT'S SO GREAT! SO LOVELY!
USUALLY YOU'D BE LIKE, "WOOOW! A FESTIVAL OF *MAGIC?!* OH, HOW FANTASTIC! I CAN HARDLY CONTAIN MYSELF!"
A... FESTIVAL?
GASP
HRMM? I EXPECTED A BIGGER REACTION OUT OF *YOU*, COCO!
KWIP
HEY, COCO!
I JUST...HAD SOMETHING ON MY MIND.
NO! I'M FINE!
FWSH
FWSH
IS SOMETHING WRONG? ARE YOU FEELING UNWELL?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? IT'S ALREADY DARK OUT!

TARTAH!

FWISH

FWISH

FWISH

COCO!

ALL YOU GUYS!

ヒヘっ!

GRIN

I'VE GOT A FAVOR TO ASK YOU ALL.

WELL, I CAN FLY THESE DAYS, SO I THOUGHT I'D POP OVER.

I WAS WONDERING ...

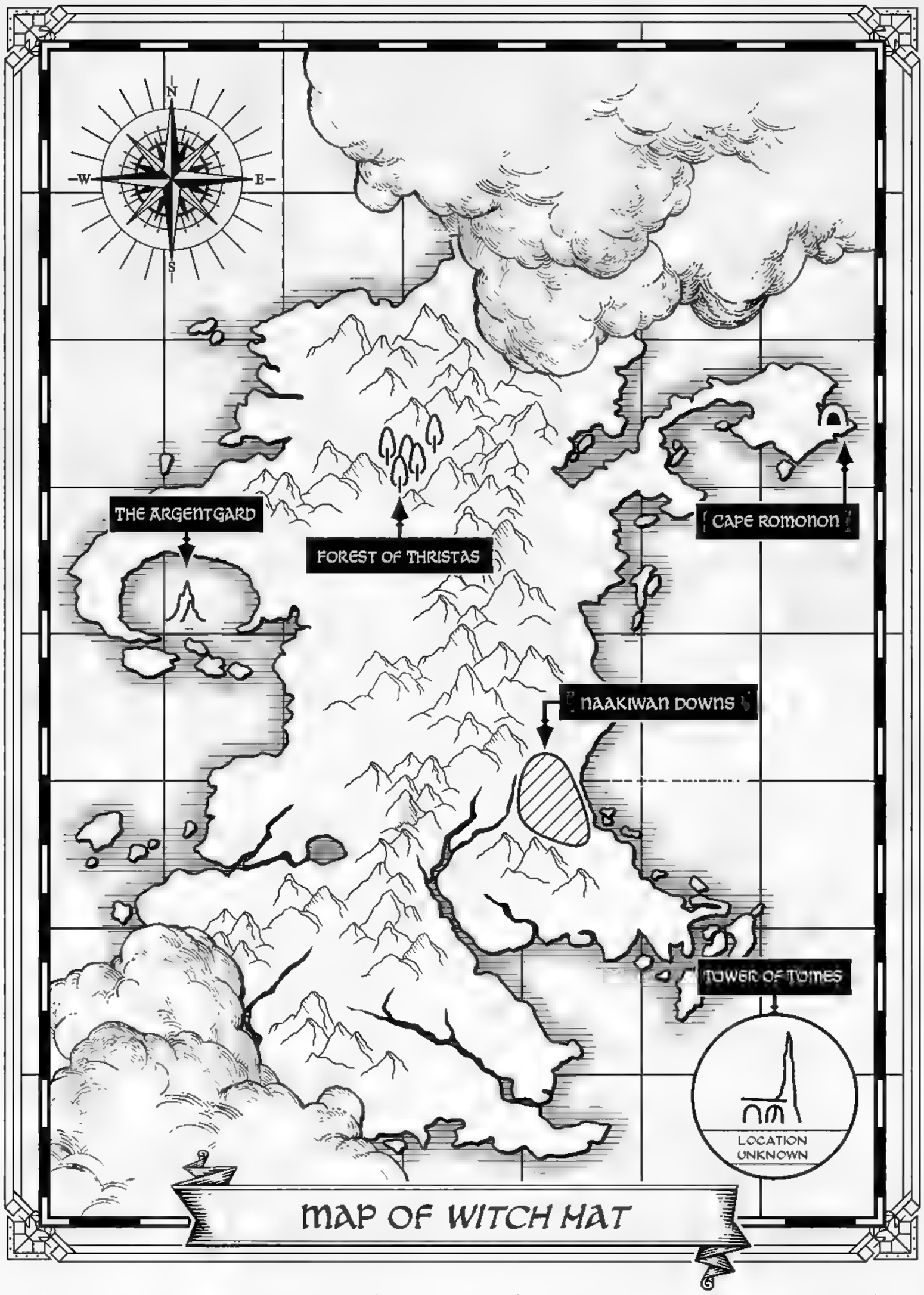
...IF MAYBE...

...YOU WANTED TO HELP RUN A STALL AT SILVER EVE?

THE WORLD OF *WITCH HAT ATELIER*

2

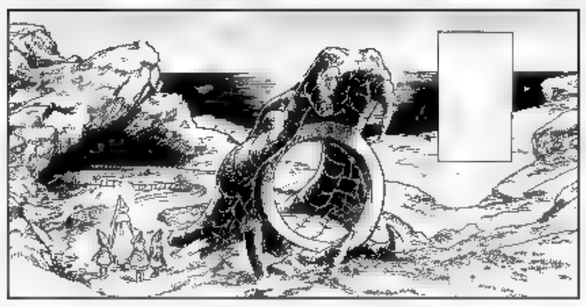
A BRIEF RECAP OF THE WORLD INHABITED BY COCO AND HER FRIENDS.



MAP OF *WITCH HAT*

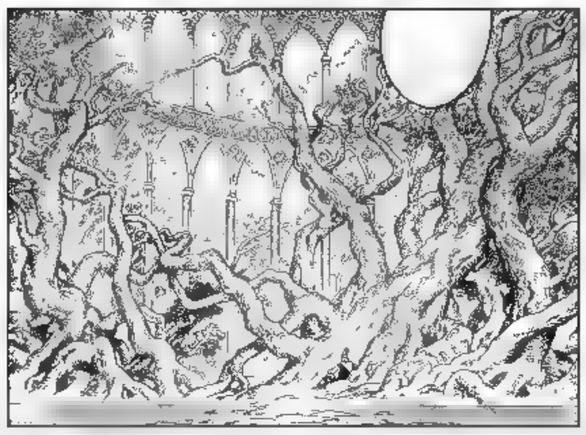
CAPE ROMONON

THE SITE OF THE SECOND TEST, "THE SINCERITY OF THE SHIELD," AND THE LOCATION OF THE SERPENTBACK CAVE—A MYSTICAL RUIN FROM THE AGE OF CHAOS, NOW LEFT UNTRODDEN EXCEPT FOR THE TEST. THE NEARBY CLIFFTOPS ARE AN IMPORTANT BREEDING GROUND FOR MYRPHON.



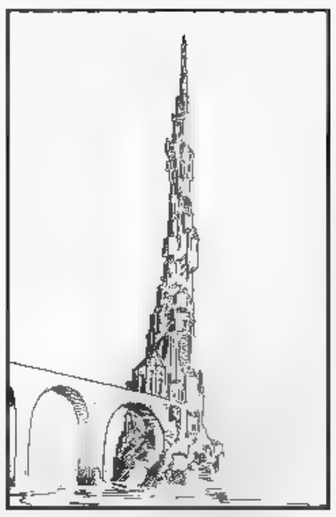
THE ARGENTGARD

A QUIET GARDEN AT THE CENTER OF DEEPWATER CASTLE. ITS CALM, SANDY BANKS SERVE AS A PLACE OF RELAXATION FOR THE MANY WITCHES WHO LIVE AT THE GREAT HALL, AS WELL AS A HOME TO SILVERWOODS, MYSTICAL TREES THAT PROVIDE WOODCRUOR, THE KEY INGREDIENT OF CONJURING INK.



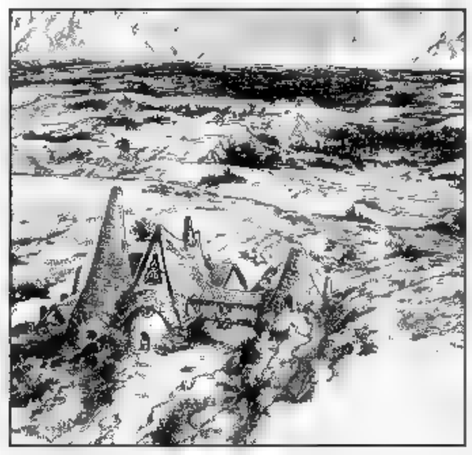
TOWER OF TOMES

A MYSTICAL TOWER IN WHICH A COPY OF EVERY BOOK APPEARS THE MOMENT IT IS CREATED. VIGILANTLY MANAGED BY WITCHES TASKED TO SERVE AS LIBRARIANS. THE MOST PROMINENT FOUR ADMINISTER TRIALS TO ALL WHO SEEK ENTRANCE; ONLY THOSE WHO PASS GAIN THE RIGHT TO STEP INSIDE.



NAAKIWAN DOWNS

THE HILLY REGION HOME TO QIFREY'S ATELIER. WINDY, DOTTED WITH COUNTLESS BOULDERS AND SHRUBS, AND WELL-TRAVERSED BY WILDLIFE, INCLUDING SCALEWOLVES, TASSELMICE, AND GRAVEWATCHER FOXES. DURING THE SEASON FOR PASSAGE STARS, SCHOOLS OF ASH-MOTTLED DRAGONS SOAR THROUGH ITS SKIES.



FOREST OF THRISTAS

A FOREST OF DEATH, EVERY PART OF WHICH IS DYED BLACK. ONCE A GLITTERING EXPANSE OF SILVERWOODS, IT CHANGED TO A SHADOWY, MIASMA-CHOKED EXPANSE WHEN THE DARK WITCH THRISTAS USED IT AS A SITE TO EXPERIMENT WITH FORBIDDEN MAGIC, SEEKING A MEANS TO RESURRECT THE DEAD.

Tartah's invitation extended, the girls excitedly prepare to attend Silver Eve—

a festival of magic to which countless witches flock!

Experience the gathering of outsiders, witches, and uninvited guests...

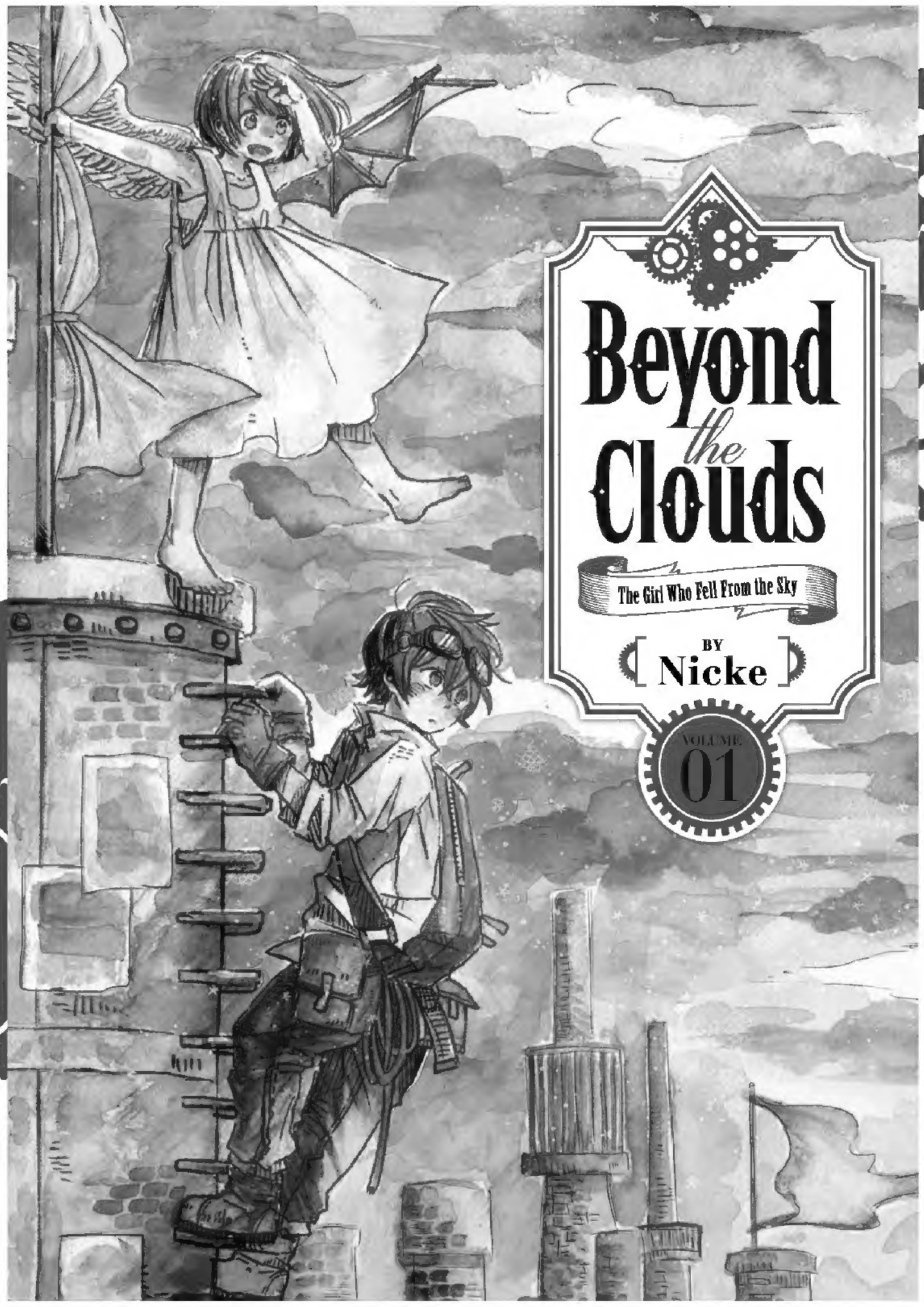
Bask in the excitement, watch the passage stars rain down...

...upon the festivities in dazzling spectacle!

Witch Hat Atelier

Volume 8: Coming Soon!!

Young characters and steampunk setting, like *Howl's Moving Castle* and *Battle Angel Alita*



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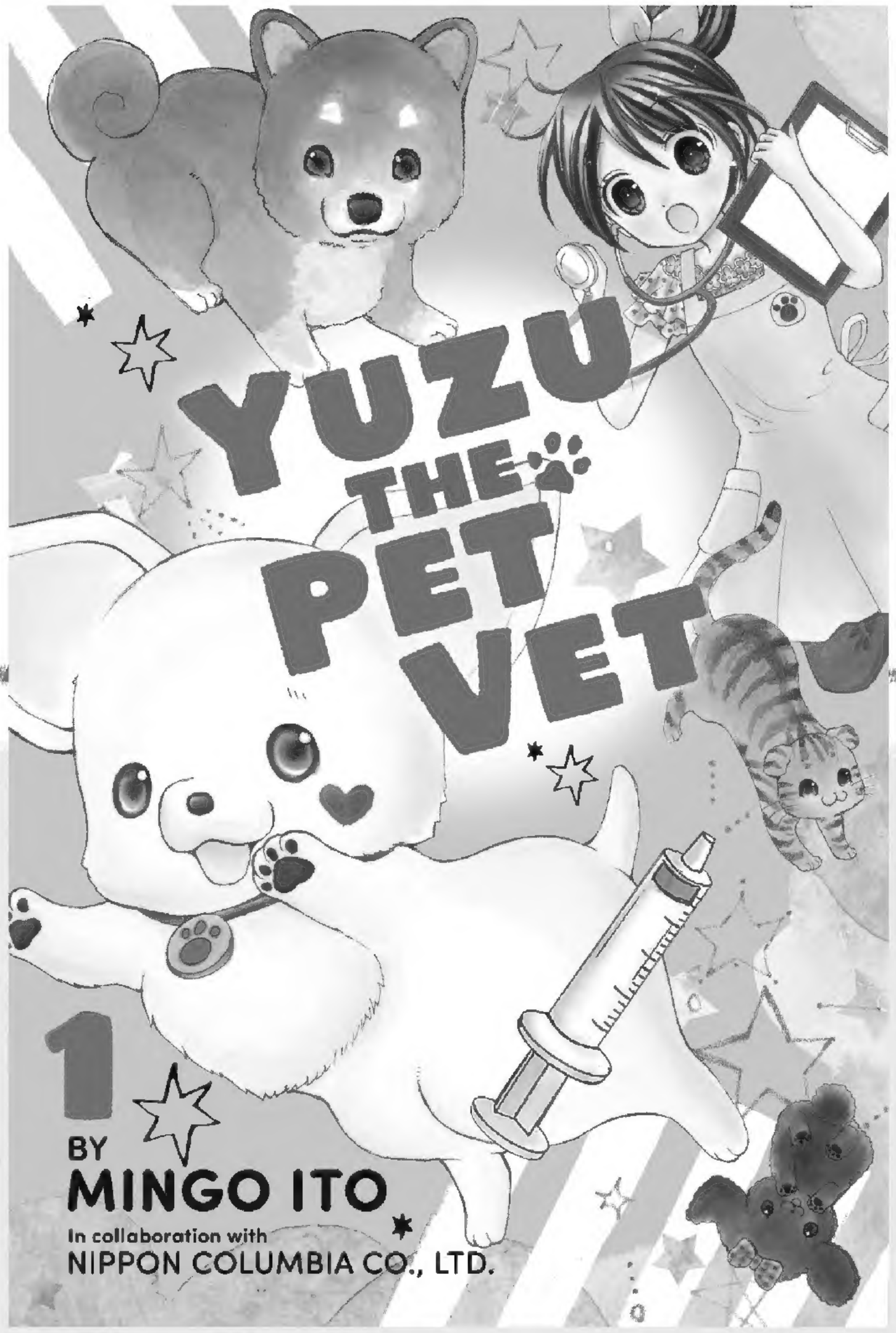
A boy with a talent for machines and a mysterious girl whose wings he's fixed will take you beyond the clouds! In the tradition of the high-flying, resonant adventure stories of Studio Ghibli comes a gorgeous tale about the longing of young hearts for adventure and friendship!

CUTE ANIMALS AND LIFE LESSONS, PERFECT FOR ASPIRING PET VETS OF ALL AGES!



Yuzu the Pet Vet © Mingo Ito / NIPPON COLUMBIA CO., LTD. / Kodansha Ltd.

KC KODANSHA COMICS

For an 11-year-old, Yuzu has a lot on her plate. When her mom gets sick and has to be hospitalized, Yuzu goes to live with her uncle who runs the local veterinary clinic. Yuzu's always been scared of animals, but she tries to help out. Through all the tough moments in her life, Yuzu realizes that she can help make things all right with a little help from her animal pals, peers, and kind grown-ups.

Every new patient is a furry friend in the making!

Witch Hat Atelier 7

KODANSHA COMICS Digital Edition

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